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CONTENTS



4

WHERE MUTUAL INTERESTS MEET

6 Movement strictly according to schedule

8 Catching up progress We tend to take for granted that our modern world is filled with discoveries and new technologies. Thanks to the application of scientific innovations, as promoted by the state, most branches are showing us amazing achievements...



PRIORITIES FOR THE YOUNG

12

10 Formula for energy saving

14 Following the rules The ellipsis in negotiations on Belarus' accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has finally been replaced by a comma...

16 Renewable source of interests Vladimir Avgustinsky, discusses pragmatic co-operation between our two countries and potential for mutually beneficial liaisons

22 Capital in investment harbour

26 When strategies coincide

28 When you look deeper What do Belarusian geologists find more often than oil and diamonds?

30 Drones see better from above Mass production of quadcopters will begin at the end of the year in Minsk

34 Plenty is no plague According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Belarus is one of the most trouble-free countries in the world in terms of provision of food safety

40 Theatre teaching itself Do we need theatrical criticism? How prestigious is the profession of theatre critic and what is theatre science? Critic Tamara Gorobchenko, who has a Ph.D. in Art History, shares her thoughts

48 Roads lead to Orsha This ancient city is almost ten centuries old. It stands on the Dnieper River which is joined by the Orshitsa River



52

WORKS IMPRESS NOT ONLY WITH APPEARANCE

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Our changing world

The world is unstable, as we know; it's an international reality of recent decades. We've had to adjust our behaviour, taking into account modern trends and challenges.

Alexander Lukashenko spoke recently at a session tackling the country's development, discussing not only domestic politics but Belarusian foreign policy. The President stressed that global integration processes are being replaced by primacy of national interests. The Head of State underlines that new approaches are preconditioned by recent changes in global economics and politics. New trends are ever more pronounced, in many countries, starting with the USA and Europe. In essence, global integration processes are being superseded by recognition of the primacy of national interests. "In layman's terms, the world is being nationalised," noted the President of Belarus.

How is this being manifested? In the economic sphere, there's the desire to protect domestic markets, and to develop domestic manufacturing, while restricting imports. In politics, the focus is shifting towards tackling domestic problems. There's a clear surge in the popularity of right-wing parties and politicians, noted Mr. Lukashenko, saying, "You can see what's going on in Germany, and it's particularly pronounced in France, in the run-up to the presidential elections."

Undoubtedly, Belarus must take into account new international trends and should be ready to react promptly. The President notes positive and

negative aspects, with a drive towards prioritising national interests. In this respect, Belarus is acting in line with global trends. However, this process does hamper our export of products and services, due to trade barriers. Even friendly nations are using such tactics, obliging Belarus to seek ways of preserving traditional trade and economic ties, while finding new niches for Belarusian exports.

These are vital tasks for the country, against a background of our changing world. The country's future will depend on solving these challenges, and on the promotion of international cooperation. For a long time, Germany has been among Belarus' leading trade-economic and investment partners in Europe. There's no reason why this should change, with a pragmatic attitude towards collaboration, for our mutual benefit, as we explore in ***Renewable Source of Interests.***

Germany has long given priority to entrepreneurship, with the German economy 'forged' by almost four million companies.

In Belarus, the private sector employs more than a million people: almost a quarter of all employees. Accordingly, it's important to take into account best world practise regarding laws, decrees and regulations, to ensure good neighbourly relations and fair competition.

To find out what else we can do to ensure that we remain ahead of the competition, dip into our current issue.



VIKTOR KHARKOV

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Viktor Kharkov.



Stability and calm as most important values

The world is changing, with global integration processes replaced by primacy of national interests, notes President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, during session tackling acute issues of country's development

According to the Head of State, the session was arranged in view of recent changes in global economics and politics. "In the economic sphere, changes are being manifested as the desire to protect domestic markets, and to develop domestic manufacturing, while reducing exports. In politics, the focus is shifting towards domestic problems, which are becoming more pronounced. A surge in public protests and the growing popularity of right-wing parties and politicians testifies to this. You can see what's going on in Germany. It's particularly pronounced in France, in the run-up to the presidential elections," notes Mr. Lukashenko. "Belarus is an open country and export-oriented. This is why we have to take into account new trends and respond promptly."

How are trends influencing our economy? The President remarked that positive and negative aspects are apparent. "On the whole, the drive towards prioritising national interests matches our intentions. It's a fact. In this respect, we're in line with global trends," asserted Mr. Lukashenko.

However, according to the President, there is a negative side to this process, as it hampers the export of our products and services, due to the introduction of barriers to trade.

Orders and general shoulder boards awarded

For the first time, the two events recognising the service of women and the Armed Forces have been harmoniously combined. The military are honoured, traditionally, on February 23rd, while Women's Day is March 8th. President Lukashenko pointed out that men serve with the purpose of protecting their wives and mothers. The event was beautiful in its perfect logic, embracing the hope of spring and spiritual warmth.

Among those awarded were twenty-one women who have raised five or

more children, receiving the Orders of Mother.

Each has her own life-affirming story, full of light. Isn't it an honour for a man to bring them a peaceful sky as a gift?

Most men would like to say that they've worked to bring peace to their nation. The President stressed, "We can have a happy life, raising children, and using our talents and skills under a peaceful sky."

Mr. Lukashenko told the awarded women, "You're amazing; you have fulfilled your main mission. The top priority of my policy is for Belarus' population to reach at least 20 million. Then, we'll have a truly strong state and no one will look askance at us."

The Commander-in-Chief reminded the military, "Perhaps, the most honourable thing is to receive a general's shoulder boards in the presence of our women. If not for women then for whom do we do all this?"

Everything should be envisaged for the sake of security

Belarus to continue close interaction with IAEA

During the participation of the Belarusian delegation in the IAEA Board of Governors meeting, in Vienna, Valentin Rybakov,

Belarus' Deputy Foreign Minister, in his speech on the Nuclear Safety Review of 2017, emphasised the special role of cooperation with the IAEA in improving the country's nuclear security infrastructure, including in the context of Belarusian nuclear power plant construction. The Deputy Foreign Minister stressed that Belarus will continue maintaining its close cooperation with the agency in issues of nuclear safety.

Where mutual interests meet

President of Georgia, Giorgi Margvelashvili, pays official visit to Belarus

In April 2015, during the visit of the President of Belarus to Georgia, the heads of our two states determined goals for developing our business interaction, aiming for trade turnover of \$200m.

At that time, our bilateral trade was modest. Alexander Lukashenko's trip to Tbilisi, and then Batumi, saw the organisation of a joint business forum, helping drive forward our mutual desire for collaboration. As a result, our trade turnover has risen considerably: by 63 percent last year, despite global economic instability, when all markets have been suffering. However, we only attained half of our target turnover.

Welcoming the President of Georgia to the Palace of Independence, for a return official visit, Mr. Lukashenko told Giorgi Margvelashvili that he has a vital role to play in strengthening the upward trend in our trade. Mr. Lukashenko underlined the openness of conversation, after negotiations in a narrow format. Previous talks in Tbilisi were warm, building trusting relations between the presidents of our two countries, as they discussed the challenges of today, within the world arena. The heads of our two states spent more than three hours tête-à-tête determining areas for cooperation, for later discussion during an extended format meeting.

Georgian agriculture is, probably, the main focus for our joint work. The

country boasts a favourable climate, fertile soil and hard-working people. However, it lacks technologies to ensure efficient farming. Mr. Margvelashvili stressed that around half of the country's population generates its income from farming, according to official statistics. Unofficially, the figure could differ. Disappointingly, the agrarian sector

ing technical maintenance of machinery. Belarus is well-placed to supply the latest agricultural vehicles, as well as setting up joint assembly production and service centres. The south of Georgia is particularly favourable for farming.

Meanwhile, Belarusian specialists are ready to help modernise lifts in blocks of flats. There are plans for joint

Alexander Lukashenko:

Georgia is an important and promising partner for Belarus in Transcaucasia. Diplomatic relations between our countries, established more than twenty years ago, are known for their high degree of trust and mutual understanding. Our interaction has progressed well across all areas. We plan to continue working with dear Georgia

produces just 9 percent of GDP, with Georgia relying heavily on imported foodstuffs: a situation that the country's leadership is eager to correct.

Mr. Lukashenko assured his colleague that Belarus will do all it can to share expertise, including setting up joint agricultural production, and offer-

ing construction of an ice rink and biathlete stadium, at Bakuriani ski resort. Belarus is also ready to supply machinery for sewing official uniforms and for the supply of food products, to security agencies.

There are many points of coincidence, as the Georgian President



Giorgi Margvelashvili and Alexander Lukashenko meet in Minsk

stressed. Inter-state dialogue is a guarantee of successful implementation of our plans. Minsk and Tbilisi may have chosen different foreign political vectors, Georgia focusing on European integration while Belarus has chosen Eurasian integration, but this presents no obstacle to meaningful dialogue on bilateral cooperation.

Our two countries are similar in courting no enemies, despite having a firm idea of national interests. They don't stand in the way of others' choices, being sympathetic to paths of independence, and respecting diversity. We each find our own strategies of governance and development, as is our sovereign right. Our inter-state dialogue is based on mutual understanding and respect.

Cooperation between Belarus and Georgia has gained momentum across all areas, noted the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, as he met media representatives after negotiations with the Georgian President, Giorgi Margvelashvili.

Georgia is an important and promising partner for Belarus in Transcaucasia. Diplomatic relations between our countries, established more than twenty years ago, are known for their high degree of trust and mutual understanding," noted Mr. Lukashenko. "Our interaction has progressed well across all areas. We plan to continue working with dear Georgia."

The Head of State expressed confidence that the opening of the Belarusian Embassy in Tbilisi, last December, will facilitate stronger cooperation. "In recent days, contacts have been activated between our governments, regions and enterprises. Most months, our two states exchange delegations across some sphere or other. Importantly, this close interaction will bring results in the trade-economic sphere," noted the President of Belarus.

Mr. Lukashenko also stressed the readiness of Belarus for further development of cooperation with Georgia across a wide range of areas: the agro-

industrial complex, design and construction of sporting facilities, supplies of various Belarusian technologies and light industry goods, the creation of joint ventures, development of interaction in the humanitarian sphere, and tourism. "You've never been a 'stranger' to us and won't be. All our experience is at your disposal; we'll do all we can," asserted the Head of State.

The President of Georgia noted that a whole range of issues had been tackled during negotiations, aiming to intensify Belarusian-Georgian relations. In particular, in the spheres of trade, tourism, culture, and education.

"I'm pleased that Belarus will strengthen relations with Georgia and will use the potential that exists between our states to ensure better standards of living," stressed the President of Georgia.

Giorgi Margvelashvili thanked Belarus for its strong support of Georgia and promised that bilateral relations will only reinforce in future.

By Vasily Kharitonov

Movement strictly according to schedule

The last two years have not been easy for Stadler Minsk JSC: external crises have significantly affected the company. Foreign customers partially abandoned their commitments and production capacities were at only 30-40 percent. Nevertheless, the company managed to find the way to retain all its employees and diversify exports. The modern enterprise in Fanipol welcomed the new 2017 year with optimism: it boasts new orders; the number of jobs will be growing and the average salary is already substantially exceeding the equivalent of five hundred Dollars.

In 2015-2016, many manufacturers turned to unpopular measures to cut costs — shifting to part-time employment and reducing staff. Although Stadler experienced hard times then (as only thirty percent of all capacity was reached), the company didn't make cuts. Currently, 440 people are employed at the Fanipol facility and, in 2017, their total number is expected to exceed 500.

The Director of Stadler Minsk, Philipp Brunner, comments on the company's strategy, "We've found jobs for people abroad, sending Belarusian specialists to plants of the Stadler Rail Group in Germany, Poland and Hungary for 2-6 months. The second step envisages export diversification — which is quite a specific measure. We are currently implementing a Norwegian project here —

assembling the body, partly doing painting and assembly. European factories will then complete the work. Moreover, we produce components for our German partners. These all enable us to maximise our production facilities."

Stadler Minsk continues its work on electric trains for Russian Aeroexpress. Some time ago, the company ordered 25 trains, but due to the Russian Rouble devaluation it couldn't meet its obligations — cutting the order to 11 trains. Five of them are already in Moscow. "Some issues need solving, most importantly, our client is making payments and this is a great success for cooperation," added Mr. Brunner.

The main order now envisages the production of 23 three-section trams of the 'Snowstorm' series for St. Petersburg. While this is only the first series, the company hopes that there will be also ad-



Train assembly for Georgia

ditional projects. Regarding cooperation with Russian Railways (which plans a major upgrade of its infrastructure), Mr. Brunner noted, "We have a competitive product that we can offer at a good price. We are ready to work on something new and participate in tenders. However, it is necessary to understand that the Russian market is quite closed to European producers, even if the company is located in Belarus."

Meanwhile, collaboration with Belarusian Railways will continue. The two sides have recently discussed the delivery of two additional trains; these are to be ordered early this year, with three more coming in 2018. "We are now busy with paperwork but hope that the order



will be realised. We are ready to make a good offer,” added Mr. Brunner.

Everything usually comes down to money and the key reason for customers failing to buy Stadler Minsk products quickly is the rather high price. The plant believes this is justified. Products with a service life of 30-50 years cannot be cheap. “We are ready to cut the price without compromising quality,” Mr. Brunner explains, adding, “However, it’s necessary to understand that the cheaper products are, the costlier their maintenance and repair. Passengers will feel this. Therefore, our secret is to find the best solution with clients. We offer competitive prices. For example, a tender for the supply of trains for the Minsk sub-

way was won by us. Generally, the cost directly depends on the technical complexity and characteristics of the order.”

Belarusian components in the total volume of Stadler Minsk’s finished products occupy a minor share so far. Belkommunmash is the supplier of some components for the ‘Snowstorm’ tram. The company admits that it’s ready to work with any supplier. Pleasingly, Belarusian producers are willing to offer competitive products not only on price but also on quality and delivery dates. “We also enable Belkommunmash to propose products for our order for the Minsk metro. However, we wish our relations to be market-based,” Mr. Brunner added.

By Polina **Konoga**

Direct speech

■ According to Director Philipp Brunner, high professional competence allow employees to receive good salaries. Knowledge of foreign languages, certificates enabling them to work at European level companies and high productivity make it possible for employees to earn money.



Catching up progress

We tend to take for granted that our modern world is filled with discoveries and new technologies. Thanks to the application of scientific innovations, as promoted by the state, most branches are showing us amazing achievements. It's hard to say which developments are most important. What is vital is that we recognise and celebrate those achievements.

We tend to take for granted that our modern world is filled with discoveries and new technologies. Thanks to the application of scientific innovations, as promoted by the state, most branches are showing us amazing achievements. It's hard to say which developments are most important. What is vital is that we recognise and celebrate those achievements.

The President recently perused works submitted for state awards, at the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Tissue and Organ Transplantation. The host venue was a symbolic choice, its team, headed by Oleg Rummo, having been recognised as a favourite in the competition. However, this doesn't downplay the

importance of developments in other branches. How can we compare organ transplantation with oil extraction? \$27,000 spent at BelNIPIneft (the Belarusian Oil Research and Design Institute) has brought over \$57 million in income, thanks to wide practical application.

Alexander Lukashenko spent much time near the National Academy of Sciences' History Institute stand, looking at the results of archaeological research. We now have conclusive evidence that the roots of Belarusian statehood date back to at least the 9th century. Our ancestors in Polotsk laid the foundations of life for future generations, without external assistance, independently. There's no reason to repeat how important this discovery is. The President advises that new knowledge be included into the educational syllabus, since it opens wider horizons of understanding of our identity and origins.

Communication, technologies, selection, construction, and microelectronics; we could write a fully-fledged thesis about each project presented at the exhibition. Listening to the President chatting with scientists and those engaged in production, I noted which projects seemed most significant. Mr. Lukashenko is demanding personalisation of achievements: that the person who initially proposes an idea, inspiring others, be credited.

The President has instructed the Administration and the Government to thoroughly analyse all past recipients of state awards. Are they still yielding results? Objectivity is vital in this respect. Moreover, we need to ensure that we encourage scientists on 'the shop floor' — not just their managers.

This second part of the event focused on this, as Mr. Lukashenko toured the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre: his brainchild. Oleg



YURIY MOZOLEVSKIY

At the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Organ and Tissue Transplantation Rummo suggested the idea and developed it, but it would have been impossible without direct support from the President. Some were sceptical as to how far the Centre would be able to influence healthcare but, to date, 3,500 transplants have been completed.

A small boy runs along the corridor, as if powered by his own small

motor. When he was just a couple of months old, born with hepatic cirrhosis, it seemed unlikely that he'd live. Today, one year later, his parents can hardly keep up with him. Marina Ananich was also born with a condition that necessitated a kidney and liver transplant; she's now the happy mother of a baby three months old. Li-

ana Buinovets was only 20 months old when she ate a death's cup mushroom and irrevocably damaged her liver. Now, the first grader feels as happy as her peers.

Mr. Lukashenko first met young Nikolay Sergeenkov when the Centre was newly opened. At the time, the one-year-old boy with a congenial liver defect had just received a transplantation. Invited to meet the President again, the youngster showed him the teddy bear he gave to him at their first meeting. It's his lucky charm.

Belarusian organ transplant surgeons are now famous far beyond our borders. One ward at the Centre has patients from Kazakhstan and Ukraine. Kumarbek Karaulov had his first transplant in his homeland but it was unsuccessful. The situation has been improved by his treatment in Minsk. Ivan Protsenko, 41, has had his first surgery in Belarus and views it as his second chance at life.

Looking into the happy eyes of patients who've received the chance of life, and into the eyes of parents of saved children, it's apparent why this branch has received state support. It's made a huge difference to the development of medicine. Some innovations at the Republican Scientific and Practice Centre have found application in wider clinical practice. Meanwhile, scientists worldwide are seeking to cultivate whole human organs, to avoid the problem of lack of donors. It may seem fantastic but, just a few years ago, complex transplant surgeries seemed as unreal.

Scientific progress is flying at a furious pace and our domestic science isn't lagging behind. Our scientific sphere is an important element in building a strong state, which makes all society strong. Oleg Rummo's Centre is making a valuable contribution to our country, offering a high level of healthcare to every citizen, rewarding all who pay taxes.

By Dmitry Kryat

Formula for energy saving

While travelling across Belarus for work, I often see new wind turbines springing up. You can't miss their huge rotating blades. New wind farms are being created in the Grodno and Minsk regions, alongside an increasing number of solar power plants. However, we have some way to go to compare with Denmark, which leads in generating renewable energy. Over 40 percent of its electricity is generated by wind.

What's preventing us from progressing faster, and what are our immediate plans? Experts, parliamentarians

and ministry representatives recently met for a round table discussion, at which renewable energy sources (RES) were discussed. Belarus may appear to lack enough wind or sunlight but specialists say that Belarus' potential to use solar panels would create almost 20 percent more solar power than in Germany, Belgium, Denmark and the UK. Meanwhile, wind energy at a height of between 50 and 150 metres is significant: quite different from how we experience it on the ground. As regards wind potential, Belarus is similar to Poland and other EU countries. Yet, the country lags behind Poland more than a hundred times regarding wind plants.

Belarus' lack of innovation in this sphere, and its state subsidy mechanism, are hampering the development of renewable energy. It seems that the country does not fully appreciate the role of wind energy: just 11MW of electricity is expected to come from this source from 2017 through until 2019. This is not enough to attract major investment. References to the high cost of such projects and their long-term return are untenable.

"Figures speak for themselves. In 2004, states invested \$60-70 billion into renewable energy projects. Today, the figure stands at \$300-350 billion. This is leading to the development of technology and is reducing the cost of

The technical potential of renewable energy sources in Belarus is estimated at

80 million tonnes of oil equivalent, which is more than the total energy consumption in the country. By 2020, the share of renewable energy generation should reach at least 6 percent

such energy,” concludes the Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission for Industry, Fuel and Energy Complex, Transport and Communication, Andrey Rybak. “In view of the potential of our science and engineering, we could independently develop equipment and power plants, for export. This would involve huge funds but would bring tremendous opportunities.”

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection’s Departmental Head, Sergey Zavyalov, agrees, saying, “Nearly 400,000 hectares of land in Belarus could be allocated to solar stations. This is expensive but, over the past decade, technology has stepped forward, so that the pay-back period has dropped from fifteen to five years. This enables us to put aside elevated ratios, which the country pays to investors for the implementation of renewable energy sources. Tariffs could be lowered.”

The Executive Director of the Renewable Energy Association, Vladimir Nistyuk, stresses the ecological angle, commenting, “A single wind turbine of 1MW makes it possible to annually reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 1,800 tonnes. The whole world is progressing along a path we’ve joined only recently. If the state, business, science and civil society work together to solve this problem, we’ll succeed.”

By Yevgeny Kononovich

Hunting technologies

Countries achieving innovative success may hope for efficient economic growth, as detailed in state programme for country’s innovative development, approved by the President for 2016-2020

World news agencies are reporting some interesting news, as Dallas Federal Court has ordered Facebook to pay \$500m in damages, for stealing technology. The lawsuit was filed by a company claiming that its early innovation was copied by Oculus, for the production of virtual reality glasses. Not only the sum of the fine is impressive but the fact that such a solid global corporation as Facebook is not averse to stealing the ideas of others — even at the risk of being brought to court. This demonstrates the importance of high technologies in successfully competing in the market. The stakes are high.

As the President recently noted, speaking of the state programme for innovative development for 2016-2020, national growth relies on this sphere.

Economist Alexey Belyaev comments, “Facilitated development of high-tech sectors should be at the heart of our economic strategy, including information and communication technologies and aerospace, nuclear energy,

bio- and nano-industry, pharmaceuticals, tool building and electronics. All promising developments need to be immediately implemented in production. The fourth global industrial revolution has already begun, revolving around robotics, automation services, 3D-printing and the digital industry. Belarus is traditionally strong in the IT sector, so we should stand firm, using it to drive forward other sectors of the economy.”

The State Committee for Science and Technology has announced the most important projects within the new state programme: production of optoelectronic technologies as the basis of thermal-imaging laser systems, at Minsk’s Vavilov Plant; the introduction of new chip manufacturing technology, at Integral; production of small diesel engines, at Minsk’s Motor Plant; construction of a battery factory in the Brest Region; and of a new nitrogen

complex at Grodno Azot. Meanwhile, the Institute of Microbiology will pilot production of enzymes for making pharmaceutical substances and the latest diagnostic tools.

Overall, the state programme includes seventy-five projects, aimed at new production in construction, engineering, chemistry, medicine, energy, agriculture and other spheres. The country should launch over

70 high-yield production facilities by 2020, focused on exports, while about **9,000** new jobs are planned

Priorities for the young

2017 is the Year of Science, aiming to enhance the role of science across all spheres of life, while improving Belarus' international image as a country with a high level of intellectual and human capital



BELTA

Great hopes are pinned on the new generation. Annually, up to 400 'recruits' join scientific academia, but what challenges do young scientists face, and how can we make them feel valued, to encourage their efforts?

The question of whether it's easy to be young in general and to be a scientist in particular is rhetorical.

Of course, we all face difficulties as we start our paths through life; what's important is how we overcome them. I'm absolutely convinced that all things are possible. The National Academy of Sciences has 2,200 young scientists — accounting for over 25 percent of scientific staff. It's a figure we can hardly ignore or disregard. Many young scientists are engaged in fundamental research at a very serious level, heading laboratories and working as leading researchers at institutes.

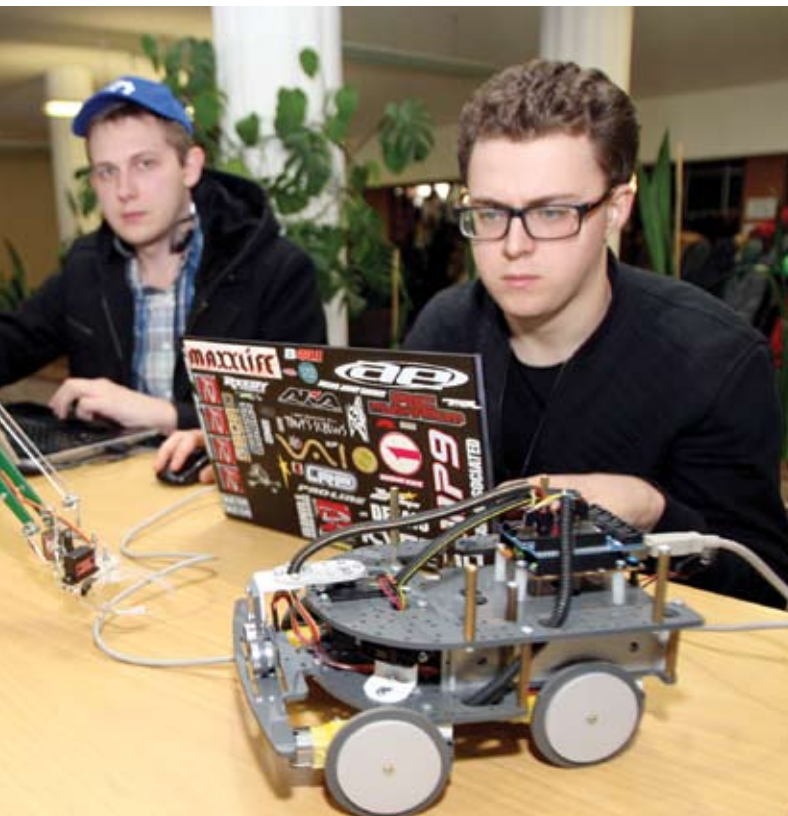
It is undeniable that, in the modern world, material incentives are vital: everyone wants a high salary, including young scientists. We often hear complaints that, in Soviet times, the scientific branch was fully financed by the state. However, it's important to understand that, at

that time, the Soviet Union enjoyed extensive possibilities; such practices no longer exist anywhere. A modern scientist is more than a subject specialist; he or she must manage people, giving clear guidance in priority areas of research. It takes time and experience to gain this knowledge. Universities can teach subject knowledge, but not the skills that accumulate through maturity.

The 'Turn-Key Young Scientist' project is being realised by the Council of the NAS' Young Scientists, this year, as part of the greater 'Young Academy' project. There will be a series of lectures to show how the scientific system works at state level and the direction in which we're moving. Young people need to know our national priorities, as applied by the National Academy of Sciences, and how the system of public funding works, for research, science and technology.

Training seminars on article writing and correct presentation of works and achievements are envisaged. In addition, there will be classes on time management, to help post-graduates plan their days effectively, to prepare their thesis on time, without repeating the mistakes of others. Some lectures will be devoted to ways of obtaining grants for short-term training, to visit international conferences and workshops. This will include how to apply for 'external financing' for further training and qualification.

Modern scientists, if they wish to succeed, need guidance to look beyond what concerns them immediately, fo-



cusing on wider application for the country and the world. They need to understand what financing sources exist (domestic and foreign) and how to use them. However, it's important not only to provide information but to showcase practical examples. With this in mind, we'll involve our senior experienced colleagues and young scientists who have already released successful publications in top international magazines and gained grants for research.

It's good for successful young scientists to encourage others. If a venerable academician urges us to work hard, we might think that we'll need to wait decades. However, if someone of our own age proclaims the same, we can relate to them, knowing that they've gained success within a short period of time, and that we follow the same path. Of course, students need to appreciate that money and success don't fall from the sky; they're the result of hard work. Nevertheless, success is possible and can be achieved in a reasonable timeframe, bringing material wealth as well as professional satisfaction.

As the saying goes, 'Give someone a fish and they'll eat for the day. Teach them to fish and they'll feed themselves for ever more.'

By Andrey **Ivanets**,
the Chairman of the NAS' Council of Young Scientists,
a Candidate of Chemical Sciences, an Associate Professor,
and the Deputy Director for Research at the Institute
of General and Inorganic Chemistry

Profession remains prestigious

Around 65 percent of young people are interested in science and the latest scientific achievements, with around 20 percent having considered a career in this field, according to a national survey recently conducted by the Youth Laboratory of Sociological Research, dedicated to the Year of Science. Countrywide, 1,200 people aged 16-31, took part, from cities and villages.

Participants described the qualities they imagined important to a scientist, with observation named by 66 percent of respondents, and persistence by 51 percent. The ability to focus well was cited by half and over 40 percent noted the need for originality and a high level of self-discipline. Other qualities mentioned were a critical approach and independence of opinion.

Meanwhile, 65 percent named the creation of new technologies as the most important function of science. Around 20 percent of respondents said they had taken part in competitions for scientific and innovative projects.

Young people view the work of scientists as more prestigious than that of doctors, engineers, lawyers, accountants, chefs, teachers, journalists or market researchers. However, in comparison to pilots, the military and IT-developers, scientific work appears less attractive.

Participants were asked to assess their own level of awareness of Belarusian scientists and their developments, with the average score being four points out of ten, indicating a low level of promotion of Belarusian science among young people. At the same time, respondents believe that the level of development of science in Belarus is higher than in Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Armenia and Kazakhstan, but lower than in Russia, Poland, Great Britain and the USA.

The co-ordinator of the national '100 Ideas for Belarus' youth competition, Yekaterina Petrashkevich, comments, "Around half of young people are interested in science and scientific achievements. This is a good indicator but — as seen from this research — young people have little knowledge of Belarusian science. We need to promote national science, including through modern creative forms, to attract young professionals but also to develop a sense of patriotism. We must pay attention to the resources used by young people: popular science websites and blogs, and groups and communities on social networks. We can promote science there. Young people have a positive image of science, with the status of a scientist viewed as more prestigious than other professions. There's great potential for the development of the scientific sphere. We need to tap into this."

By Alexey **Fedosov**



Following the rules

The ellipsis in negotiations on Belarus' accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has finally been replaced by a comma. The eighth meeting of the working group in Geneva has ended with a proposal by the organisation's management to strengthen the process. This means that, by late 2017, the country may join the elite trading bloc which currently comprises 164 states.

This summer, twenty years will have passed since the first formal meeting of the working group for negotiations on accession to the WTO. Much has happened since then: political vectors are changing, the economy and world trade are developing and new integration unions are emerging. At present, all our EAEU partners are WTO members. Belarus has been obliged to follow, to a certain extent, the organisation's standards for the past decade. The issue of joining is virtually solved. It's now time to decide when and under what conditions it should happen. It's the most challenging step.

Although there are certain advantages Belarus would theoretically obtain, much preparatory work is necessary, to ensure that social stability is preserved, as well as that of the private sector. Not only ordinary citizens but politicians and economists

continue to wonder at the opportunities and threats potentially emerging from the country joining the WTO. **The Director of the National Marketing and Price Study Centre, Valery Sadokho**, explains that several assessments must be made over a lengthy period of time.



"We aren't expecting any significant change short-term. The pros and cons of WTO membership will become evident at later stages. In the mid-term, our joining of the WTO would require us to develop our export competitiveness across various sectors and industries. In some cases, enterprises lacking competitiveness on world markets would need to be re-oriented. This is likely to apply to such industries as machine building and metalworking, as well as the construction material industry," Mr. Sadokho explains.

He notes that all branches may gain significant advantages, although ordinary consumers are unlikely to notice any change, positive or negative, initially. Of course, if the majority of industries experience benefits, their workers are likely to enjoy higher salaries. Not long ago, the World Bank reported that Belarus' membership of the WTO should lead to real incomes rising by 8.2 percent.

According to Mr. Sadokho, Belarus' move to bring legislation into line with WTO requirements makes it more transparent to investors. Foreign investors tend to be more willing to partner WTO member states, which may have an indirect impact on increasing employment and the export potential of Belarusian companies. Mr. Sadokho believes that market transparency and increased competitiveness on the Belarusian market should lead to lower prices.

The Chairman of the Standing Committee on Economic Policy, of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly, Vladislav Shchepov, notes that, in comparison to our EAEU

partners (which are already members of the organisation), Belarus is at a disadvantage. He comments, "In particular, Russia and Kazakhstan have made commitments to reduce tariff protection measures. We're forced to take this into account, as the EAEU market now offers imported products at lower prices. If our companies duplicate goods, then competition intensifies. Production volumes potentially fall and income deteriorates. However, while manufacturers suffer, it can benefit consumers in terms of lower prices for high-tech products, and greater choice."

He foresees that Belarusian companies need to prepare for increased competition and should not delude themselves: if Belarus does not prepare, foreign trade will suffer, resulting in a negative balance. On the other hand, access to European markets should become much easier. "The Government needs not only to calculate the consequences of Belarus' accession to the WTO but to develop and propose compensatory measures, taking into account the available budget and technical capabilities," adds Mr. Shchepov.

Business circles take a stern view, believing it necessary to defend their rights. "Importantly, we must learn how to defend ourselves in court," states **the Chairman of the Presidium of the Republican Confederation of Entrepreneurship, Vladimir Karyagin.**

"In particular, any enterprise can accuse you of violating a rule or of dumping, so it's vital to be able to defend your interests and participate in anti-dumping investigations. Some of these proceedings last two or three years. Strengthening of sectoral and regional business associations is vital, since neither ministries nor the government can step in to protect an enterprise."



The Government needs not only to calculate the consequences of Belarus' accession to the WTO but to develop and propose compensatory measures, taking into account the available budget and technical capabilities

There is another problem: those joining the WTO later need to accept the rules approved by existing members. "Accordingly, it's more advantageous to be among the first to join. Adaptation is then easier. We'll need to make a lot of concessions," Mr. Karyagin admits.

Some believe that the WTO is already 'out of date'. **Professor Mikhail Zhudro, of the Belarusian State Economic University's Department of Economics and Business Management,** asserts, "The WTO is an old lady. Speaking in a more civilised manner, it's a club of good manners in business communications. Truly, the organisation has fulfilled its mission but, since 1999, the world has changed a great deal and other interactive platforms are needed. Look at the countries which joined the WTO after 2000-2005. None has demonstrated positive dynamics."

Even if this is true, the WTO covers about 96 percent of world trade and non-participation brings not only economic disadvantage but negatively affects a country's image. **Economy expert Anton Boltochko, from the Liberal Club,** believes that joining the WTO should long ago have become a matter of principle for Belarus. He is convinced that it will increase the credibility of our economic and political institutions.

"At the same time, accession to the WTO is not a solution to economic problems," the expert warns. "As foreign practice indicates, serious advantages from being part of the organisation can only be obtained where a country is ready to conduct economic reform, particularly of the private sector. Joining the WTO is not an end in itself. It's an instrument enabling a country to create favourable conditions for economic growth and development."

Mr. Boltochko stresses that our economy is seeing some progress, with the Government's five-year plan focusing on market solutions. He underlines, "Belarus' accession to the WTO by late 2017 looks feasible".



By Polina Konoga

Renewable source of interests



Germany has long been a leading trade and economic partner of Belarus in Europe, as well as an investor, and continues to be so. The Head of the Representation of the German Economy in Belarus, Vladimir Avgustinsky, discusses pragmatic cooperation between our two countries and potential for mutually beneficial liaisons.

The Representation, which you've headed for a long time, is an outpost for the German economy. How does it work to aid integration with the country to which it's accredited?

Despite the global financial and economic crisis, the crisis of the Eurozone, Germany remains one of the main driving forces of integration processes within the EU. At the same time, Germany, like other countries with a similar (non-energy) economic structure, is experiencing high energy costs and relatively high labour costs, with an increasing shortage of manpower.

Yet, Germany continues to be the most attractive investment country in Europe, according to the European Survey of Attractiveness (E&Y European Attractiveness Survey 2016) published by Ernst & Young in June 2016.

The secret of Germany's success in keeping such a high position, even in times of crisis, is its reliance on innovation, structural reform and correction of industrial policy. These are the country's

advantages, which are often mentioned in regard to Belarus: particularly, its economic and political stability. The strongest European economy is high-tech, well diversified and enjoys constant growth. Priority is given to entrepreneurship; the German economy is 'forged' by almost four million companies, which, among other things, realise the innovative potential of the country. Thanks to business, Germany ranks, steadily, in first place globally for export of technological products. It also enjoys first-class infrastructure, in its quality of roads, airports and railway networks. For the third year in a row, Germany is the world leader, according to the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index.

It's easy to make comparison with the Republic of Belarus, whose advantages include:

- A favourable geographical and geopolitical position between the EU and the EAEU, with high transit potential.
- Efforts by the country's leadership to create a favourable framework for economic and investment activities (with almost the entire country as an investment site, offering preferential terms — such as in small towns and rural areas, HTP, FEZs, and the Industrial Park).
- Political stability, which contrasts with the situation in neighbouring Ukraine and sanctions between Russia and the EU. Since 2012, the indicator of 'political stability' has topped annual surveys on the business climate in the Republic of Belarus.
- Developed infrastructure and highly qualified personnel, which are ranked among the top three favourable factors by German investors.
- Further opportunities for cooperation, as is evident from viewing activities by foreign, including German, companies. There is potential to expand these greatly.

If Germany and Belarus share similar advantages, then why is there such a significant difference between their investment attractiveness? We must look to our approach to using these advantages to drive economic growth. Germany, though lacking in significant natural resources, encourages innovation, and gives support to small and medium-sized businesses, encouraging their export potential. It promotes powerful development in the scientific-research sphere, which directly affects industrial development.

We might assume that the integration of Germany and Belarus is less active than it was, let's say, twenty years ago. Why? You probably know the answer to this question, or you may have your own ideas...

Historically, Belarus was a place of investment. Being an assembly shop of the former USSR, Belarus housed a number of competitive production facilities. However, the model — existing for the last twenty-five years — was based on the potential of state-owned enterprises. It exhausted itself long ago, making it impossible to use market mechanisms to stimulate the development of competition. Therefore, modernisation projects had little effect. Belarus has been attempting to catch up with developed countries, while facing new global challenges, such as intensification of social and economic development and a new industrial revolution. There's also the need to find new opportunities for providing economically effective climate and environmental protection. At the moment, these challenges guide the economic, industrial and investment policy of Germany. It seems this experience would be useful to Belarus.

I'll try to explain. In forming and realising its economic policy, Germany now relies on:

- Increased government (and private, primarily domestic) investment, to further develop infrastructure (already being the world leader in this field!), education

and innovation, through the creation of start-ups and the attraction of venture capital;

- Ensuring the economy's employment needs are met, through more active involvement in the labour process, including making use of people of retirement age, refugees, young parents, and foreign specialists;
- Cost-effective energy supply, climate and environmental protection;
- Opening of new markets outside Europe and expansion of export opportunities for enterprises.

These directions clearly show that work is underway to improve our advantages, driving forward economic growth and increasing the country's welfare, as well as being factors of investment attractiveness. Belarus also has huge potential but it's important to use it effectively.

Cooperation continues between the Belarusian and German economies but perhaps less effectively than we'd like. Can you give us some examples of successful cooperation?

Many German companies have long been represented on the Belarusian market and are well known to professionals as suppliers of high-tech, modern equipment, and as reliable partners.

For dozens of years, German giant Siemens has operated on the Belarusian market. At present, this company operates through its bureau in Minsk — representing its worldwide recognised technologies, including in the energy sector. These are conceptual solutions for the design, construction, reconstruction and operation of power plants, the necessary components, systems and equipment for the production of energy from various fuels, software for network management, electricity sales and electrical balance management.



Useful dialogue: Director of Robert Bosch in Minsk, Vladimir Rybolovlev, and Chairman of BelCCI, Vladimir Ulakhovich

As part of this activity, Siemens has realised dozens of projects on installation and maintenance of generating equipment at Belarusian state district power plants, at thermal power stations, and at large industrial enterprises, such as Grodno Azot, Belaruskali, and Gomelsteklo.

Robert Bosch launched on the Belarusian market in the 1990s. In addition to automotive and industrial technologies and consumer products, Bosch also offers energy-efficient solutions, being the leading supplier of thermo-technics and security systems and the largest manufacturer of heat pumps.

Since 2004, the subsidiary company of Wilo SE, a European leader in the production of energy-saving pumping equipment for water supply, heating, water disposal and fire extinguishing, has been operating in the Republic of Belarus.

In 2006, a factory for producing Ceresit-brand construction materials, made by Henkel Bautechnik, set up in Zaslavl, providing thermal insulation for buildings.

For many years, Knauf has been making its contribution to improving the energy efficiency of construction in Belarus.

Modern IT solutions for power system management at micro and macro levels are offered by world-renowned German software developer SAP.

I could go on.

For a long time, the RETHMANN Group of Companies, which are key players on the world market in the spheres of water purification, collection and processing of secondary raw materials, logistics and bio-industrial goods, have operated in Belarus. They enjoy projects with SARRIA Bio-Industries (a plant for reclamation of waste for industrial application and production of alternative combustible and biodiesel fuels in Bereza) and REMONDIS (transportation and processing of municipal waste in Minsk).

In 2007-2008, LEHMANN Maschinenbau GmbH implemented a project to construct a waste sorting



At BAU 2017 international exhibition in Munich

facility at Novopolotsk's Biomechanical Plant of Communal Recyclable Resources. The supply of equipment was carried out by German companies in the Minsk and Mogilev regions, alongside construction and installation services, and consulting and engineering support for the construction of biogas complexes.

Currently, a pilot project is running in the agro-town of Torguny (Vitebsk Region) using local and renewable energy resources to create electricity. Technical support, pre-design works, production and delivery of equipment, support during construction, installation, and commissioning are carried out by German Viessmann.

This list goes on and on. The main idea is that we must continue to develop cooperation. As I've already noted, the secret of success in maintaining Germany's high position, even in times of crisis, is reliance on innovation, structural reform of its research and innovation system, and adjustment of its industrial policy. However, the 'country advantages' we spoke of (and which it shares with Belarus) are vital. We continue

improving these aspects, driving forward economic growth and increasing the country's standard of living. Only then can we look at other factors of investment attractiveness.

Belarus also boasts huge potential to become part of the value chain within the global and regional division of labour. It's important to find points of growth, which, alongside historical and geopolitical country advantages, and in conjunction with structural reform, allow us to make the necessary leap. Belarus needs to study the experience of other countries and relate this to application in Belarus. This is the most important task for institutions implementing investment policy and stimulating foreign economic activity.

Are our prospects encouraging, regarding the restoration of business ties, the implementation of joint business projects, and the conduct of interested dialogue?

In early 2016, the EU lifted sanctions against Belarus: undoubtedly, a landmark event. The intensification of official contacts at various levels, on the part of the EU and Germany with Belarus, is a new reality. We



At 9th Day of German Economy

hope that this will give new, positive and constructive impulses to bilateral German-Belarusian economic cooperation. The Representation of the German Economy, which last year marked its fifteenth year of activity within Belarus, is ready to intensify bilateral Belarusian-German cooperation.

Over the past fifteen years, the Representative Office of the German Economy in Minsk has experienced ups and downs in its political and economic relations with Belarus. The missions' aim has always been

(even in the complicated framework of conditions existing in the country) to create opportunities for German companies to establish and expand cooperation with Belarusian partners, and to assist Belarusian companies in entering the German market.

Such was the mission for which the German Union of Industrial and Commercial Chambers created the Representation Office. The Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy will, I believe, in the future, link to the work of the Representative Office. German companies need well-

organised support when entering the Belarusian market and expanding their activities. The European Union and, therefore, Germany, intends to try new paths of cooperation with Belarus. The potential of bilateral trade in goods and services is far from exhausted. Against the backdrop of instability in the economies of Russia and Ukraine — the two most important foreign trade partners of Belarus — new directions for bilateral cooperation with Germany and the EU are opening up.

Cooperation is already afoot in the fields of logistics and energy between German and Belarusian enterprises. At the same time, vocational training projects are supporting industrial cooperation. Only by training highly-qualified personnel can we ensure the preservation of well-paid jobs in the traditional sectors of Belarusian industry and the creation of new jobs in promising sectors of the future. This is the only way to increase the export potential of Belarusian enterprises. There's an urgent need today.

The Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy of Germany provides German exporters and investors with tools to stimulate foreign economic activity in the form of guarantees for export credits ('Hermes cover') and investment guarantees. In addition, over the years, the Ministry has successfully implemented a programme to improve the skills of specialists and management personnel at small and medium-sized enterprises in Belarus.

In parallel, the Ministry has been funding the German Economic Group in Belarus for many years. The demand-driven activities of this group of consultants make a significant contribution to supporting the creation of an adequate framework for the operation of foreign enterprises in the country. However, the success of the above-mentioned events would be unthinkable without the co-ordinated support rendered

Facts

■ The Representation of the German Economy began its activity in 1995, as the Contact Office of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia — the Representation of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Bonn. In 2000, under the decision of the Federal Ministry of Economics of Germany and the German Union of Industrial and Commercial Chambers, it became the Representative Office of the German Economy in the Republic of Belarus. The official opening took place in 2001. Since then, the Representative Office has been part of the worldwide network of German foreign chambers of commerce. There are more than 130 offices in ninety countries around the world, supporting the foreign economic activities of German businesses and promoting the effective development of trade and economic relations between German and Belarusian enterprises.

to German companies in Belarus by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, the German-Belarusian Economic Club and the Representation of the German Economy.

What actions, forums and other events has the Representation organised to encourage rapprochement between the economies of Germany and Belarus?



International BAU 2017 exhibition attended by Belarusian representatives

Germany needs reliable partners in Eastern Europe, while Belarus needs broader diversification of economic ties e.g. with China. Given the highly developed technical base of the Belarusian economy, this role is more suitably guided towards the German economy and the internal European market.

For fifteen years, the Representation of the German Economy has acted as a contact body for businesses. It has laid the foundation for companies to master the Belarusian market. With the help of the Representation, they've dealt with an experienced partner whose team can provide support directly in Belarus.

I want to emphasise that the effective work of our foreign bureau would be impossible without the support of the host country. The crucial fact is that

the authorities assist. There are no obstacles and you can work in a constructive atmosphere. Of course, it's even better when, as in the case of the Days of the Belarusian Economy in Berlin and other cities, we organise events together with Belarusian partners, and launch formats with the prospect of continuation. This ensures consistency and trust, and should inspire the Representation

to continue its intensive work to expand economic cooperation between our two countries. Probably, the result of all these efforts will be the transformation of the Representation to a Delegation and then into a German-Belarusian Chamber of Commerce; I believe this will happen one day.

What are the Representation's plans? Does it change its activities to reflect the current situation in relations between our two economies? What tasks does it foresee for itself in the near future?

The Representation has been successfully operating for fifteen years — which is a considerable achievement. Other countries have tried to create their own representative offices in Belarus, to strengthen the role of companies and enterprises, but have failed to gain particular success.

Speaking of our initial hopes, when we first opened, at the beginning of the new millennium, Belarus was among the top twenty-five fastest growing economies in the world! Its GDP grew by 5 percent every year; moreover, from 2004-2008, it saw GDP growth of more than 10 percent. It wasn't sustainable, however, and the global situation has become much more difficult, because of the decline in oil prices and the squeezing of traditional markets. The Belarusian economy has faced huge challenges. Being an open economy with a strong dependence on exports, it's susceptible to market fluctuations and financial crises.

I hope that the fifteen years of our Representation have brought effective and efficient cooperation in the development of trade and economic relations between the Republic of Belarus and Germany. Over this time, the contractual and organisational basis for cooperation between the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and German partner organisations has significantly strengthened.

The co-operative agreement between the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the German Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry is gaining more momentum. In 2013 and 2015, we organised Days of the Belarusian Economy in Berlin. With positive co-operative dynamics between the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Union of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry, we can see clear intentions to update the agreement. It will feature new initiatives, undoubtedly giving impetus to relations between our chambers.

We're working to improve the effectiveness of various Belarusian-German business events, knowing that great potential exists for cooperation, to the benefit of both countries.

By Vladimir **Mikhailov**

► Foreign priorities now known

Belarusian Railways determines areas of international cooperation

Belarusian Railways is focusing on cargo transportation between China and Belarus, and cooperation with residents of the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park in the transport-logistics sector, as well as the organisation of international traffic. It is also developing collaboration with Chinese provinces, using high-speed container trains.

Special focus is on interaction with railways in Russia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, Poland, Germany, and Estonia. The goal is to attract additional freight traffic, further developing passenger transportation, and following a co-ordinated and competitive tariff policy. To ensure efficiency, electronic documents are to become the norm for international transportation, and there will be a co-ordinated joint plan to develop near-border railway infrastructure.

Plans also include the completion of line electrification between Molo-dechno, through the state border, to Naujoji Vilnia and organisation of passenger transportation between Minsk and Vilnius, via modern electric trains.

Belarusian Railways offices in Russia, Kazakhstan and Poland will be closely liaising with railways, freight owners, rolling stock operators, forwarders and shipping agents, to attract additional traffic.



LIZA TIMASHKOVA

Listed among safest countries

We've been seeing heated debate over how the country should develop, as touched upon during the recent 'Big Conversation with the President', featuring journalists, political scientists, economists and leaders of social movements. Looking closely at Belarusians' fears, it's clear that, regardless of political views, beliefs or preferences, our desire to improve our standard of living and comfort unites us. Security is of key importance to everyone.

Numbeo.com is known worldwide for collating statistics from various countries and cities in various fields. Its recent crime ratings place Belarus among the top ten safest countries, scoring 77.74 (out of 100), behind Qatar in first place, with 84.30. Only four European countries — Belarus, Austria, Denmark and Georgia — were among the top ten.

Our rating speaks for itself but public perceptions are also important. The Head of State recalls events in Ukraine and the importance of Belarus remaining calm and comfortable for its residents. Statistics indicate that Minsk enjoys the lowest level of theft, robbery, street assaults and car theft, while Minsk residents are less likely to suffer from physical attacks

because of skin colour or religion. It's safe to take an evening stroll, as locals know.

Belarusians may take these statistics for granted but the reality is different in neighbouring countries. The Ukrainian cities of Kharkov, Kiev and Lvov are among Eastern Europe's top ten suffering from crime. First place among the most dangerous cities in Eastern Europe goes to Yekaterinburg (Russia). In Western Europe, the three criminal outsiders constitute Lund (Sweden), Naples (Italy) and Marseille (France).

There's much to consider when planning 'a better future'. Challenges remain but we should remember the value of what we've already achieved.

By Nina **Vasilieva**



Model of an international eco-city

Capital in investment harbour

This year, the number of residents at the Chinese-Belarusian Great Stone Industrial Park is set to double, at least, with around ten new companies ready to join, generating almost \$100 million for the country



However, to achieve this goal, investment legislation needs revision. What benefits will future Park residents enjoy?

The Belarusian-Chinese Great Stone Industrial Park is often named 'a pearl of the Silk Road Economic Belt' in advertising brochures distributed among investors at international forums. However, it's not yet sparkling with investment: western and even Chinese companies appear in no hurry to join the business project — asserting that Belarus offers less than ideal conditions. Despite unprecedented measures to improve our business climate, we're losing out to Eurasian Economic Union partners in terms of preferences granted to residents of industrial parks. A draft Presidential decree aims to amend the situation, encouraging potential investors and helping create truly beneficial conditions for residents. Our correspondent visited the Smolevichi District to see how construction works are progressing, and to learn more about plans to liberalise conditions for investors.

Wide prospects

Two and a half years ago, the site was no more than fields and marshes, located 25 kilometres from Minsk. Now, you can discern the features of the future international eco-city. Roads and engineering networks are complete, covering seven streets: Minsky and Pekinsky avenues, and Rubinovaya, Sapfirovaya and Malakhitovaya streets form the skeleton. The first administrative eight-story building and a typical production building are almost ready, with interior decoration soon to begin. By mid-summer, the buildings will house a one-stop-shop service, the management company's offices and the first residents of the Park.

"Last year, our main efforts were focused on creating engineering and transport infrastructure in the Park's first zone," comments the First Deputy General Director of the Industrial Park Development Company CJSC, Kirill Korootev. "Everything is now ready for the first residents to start construction. The site has gas, electricity and water, while commissioning works have begun for sewage treatment plants."

To understand the scale of existing infrastructure, it's enough to mention that this matches that provided to a

*The Great Stone project should, by 2020, see investment rise from \$ **2** billion to \$ **4.6** billion. Moreover, Belarus' GDP should grow by 0.9-2.0 percent, while exports may increase by \$ **1.5-5.2** billion annually*

town of 50,000 residents. The town will continue growing, with the remaining segments of the first stage, covering 850 hectares, receiving their infrastructure. In Q1, the management company is to begin constructing an administrative and residential area, followed by the first residential and social infrastructure

Word-for-word



Pan Yong, General Director of Bel Huawei Technologies JSC:

In early 2014, the Chinese Huawei corporation became the first resident of the Great Stone Industrial Park, registering its Bel Huawei Technologies company. This is another step towards Belarus and China drawing closer. Our company focuses not on the sale of goods but on making the life of Belarusians better and the country richer and more progressive.

Our presence in the market, including our residence in the Great Stone Park, pursues several goals — including promoting the development of friendship between our two countries, assisting local operators in improving the quality of the data transmission network, reducing communication costs, and

improving the overall level of communications. Priorities also include the creation of jobs (over 75 percent of our office staff are Belarusian), support of scientific research, realisation of the Government's ICT transformation strategy, and increasing the spread of high-speed Internet access.

Huawei is actively investing into the training of future professionals in the telecommunications industry, while opening training laboratories and innovative engineering and educational centres at Belarus' leading universities. In addition, we'd like to create an open, mutually beneficial industry ecosystem that will give end users the opportunity to experience all the benefits of the ROADS concept. The ecosystem will simultaneously support operators' businesses, and stimulate the digital transformation of vertical industries. Huawei Corporation is helping to increase the investment attractiveness of Belarus.

sites. In 2017, bus routes connecting the Park with Smolevichi and Minsk will come into operation.

The Great Stone Park aims to become a unique platform for investors, housing modern high-tech production facilities. However, no one is queuing up to become a resident of the Park: in 2016, only one company signed such a contract. At the moment, eight residents are registered, in addition to twelve companies with similar status. So, why are investors dragging their feet?

All aspects of competition

Last August, the Chief Executive Director of the Great Stone Park, Hu Zheng, underlined that strict requirements placed on residents were an obstacle to attracting investors. "It's important to soften criteria for investors and residents at the start-up stage, while broadening their activities," he said. "Otherwise, attracting investment will be problematic."

Lack of information on the project globally, as well as the world economic crisis, are contributing, unfavourable factors, alongside competition from our EAEU partners. Russia and Kazakhstan

offer more favourable conditions, with lower VAT and without charge for infrastructure; businessmen are being led by their wallets. Initial requirements for companies wishing to join the Park included at least \$5 million of investment. Moreover, enterprises must be engaged in particular spheres: engineering, electronics, biotechnology, logistics, fine chemicals, new materials and pharmaceuticals.

"In practice, we're facing some nuances which need correction," emphasises Mr. Koroteev. "A high-tech company will never join if there's no basic infrastruc-

ture and where nobody works. We must introduce more flexible requirements: primarily, additional spheres for Park membership, to include IT businesses, the media sphere, medical services and other segments. We're ready to provide residents with not only infrastructure but with ready-made buildings, to cut their expenses."

He notes that, from this year, the investment threshold has been reduced from 1 million Euros to 500,000 (subject to investment within three years of the date of signing the agreement). Chinese partners are paying attention to this,



VITALIY GIL

Essentially

Oleg Plavsky, Deputy Chairman of Minsk's Regional Executive Committee:



Minsk Regional Executive Committee is the second largest shareholder in the Great Stone Industrial Park: the country plans to invest about \$37 million in future stages of project development. Last year, infrastructure was created at the Park and it will be completely launched in a couple of months. The primary task is to attract investors. Truly, there are some difficulties and we understand that the whole country needs to work jointly to resolve the issue.

It's important to understand that, in considering potential residents, it's not worth accepting cheap offers. In the region, and the country as a whole, there are sufficient sites for the implementation of ordinary ideas. The Great

Stone was developed for innovative projects; we value each investor who comes with technologies of the future. The Industrial Park must be a promising site, locating high-tech production.

As regards residents, the emphasis is on Belarusian and Chinese companies at the initial stage but we see that bilateral cooperation alone is unlikely to create great prospects. The site should also be attractive to other investors. With this in mind, the Great Stone is now advertised within the international arena, with interest being shown by European companies. In future, it would be best if residents created a venture fund to finance promising developments. All these factors, together, will help create our investment attractiveness, as planned initially. Steps are already being worked out to mitigate the climate for residents, including in the tax sphere. It's especially important that the original rules of the game remain unchanged and stable.

Among the Park's residents are eight companies, with twelve more legal entities registered and seventeen projects passing the stage of business planning



asking to remove competition on the domestic market.

Another aspect deterring potential residents is that exemption from income tax for the first ten years (with the next ten at half the usual income tax rate) commences from the date of registration rather than operation. If it takes 2-3 years to build premises, the company has lost out. Many are keen to sign papers only once they've built premises.

"In reality, this element hasn't been justified," Mr. Koroteev admits. "Initially, we'd hoped to encourage residents to build faster, but this hasn't happened: 1-2 years pass from the receipt of all technical specifications to the issuance of a building permit. I think the practice applied for our free economic zones and among our Russian and Kazakh partners should be used here. Counters for privileges must start from the moment of tax base establishment. This principle is most attractive for projects which are realised in an 'open field'."

Benefits for investors

To facilitate conditions for residents and increase the investment attractiveness of the Park, a Presidential decree is now being prepared. Its developers have included a wide range of preferences and bonuses, with their adoption aiming to attract investments — primarily foreign, direct investment.

Meanwhile, the one-stop-shop service being introduced should remove

unnecessary bureaucratic procedures. As the company in charge of developing the Industrial Park admits, potential investors are deterred by volatile legislation and business conditions. Accordingly, we need to set fixed principles for the Park's operation. Mr. Koroteev explains, "Changeable conditions discourage many investors, especially European — even more than high tax rates. Residents should enjoy unchanging conditions. In other countries, this is called 'grandfather's reservation', to protect investors from changing legislation in the host country. It guarantees against the regime's deterioration for the entire period of the investment project."

In the sphere of customs regulation, China has proposed a regime for the bonded zone of the Park, making it legally possible to combine the territory of the Park with that of Minsk National Airport, enjoying diverse customs preferences. Moreover, residents should see softer conditions in the sphere of labour relations and migration.

According to Mr. Koroteev, it would be great to introduce visa-free entry into the country for potential investors and residents, for up to 180 days annually. "We've been thinking over this idea for a long time and our Chinese colleagues support it. The country has already taken certain steps in this direction. Belarus has the experience of a special regime for the Avgustovsky Canal and the Belovezhskaya Pushcha. In addition, a five-

Since the beginning of the project, about

\$235 million *has been invested in the development of the Park, with budgetary funds accounting for*

about 5 percent. The Park's development is being conducted in stages: the first stage

(851 hectares) is divided into sub-stages and the launching area of

354 *hectares is now being developed. Six stages are planned, with the last implemented in 2025-2030*

day visa-free regime was introduced not long ago. However, this isn't long enough for a potential investor; western partners would view this as a signal of openness. In addition, it would inspire the development of business tourism," the adds.

Reducing rent costs would also help. The company's management admits that land rates are even lower than the cost of land lots. However, this is not enough, so there is a proposal for residents to be exempt from VAT on land. The document will be soon submitted to the Government for consideration. Mr. Koroteev believes that much work has been done to improve the situation, which should cause a surge of interest among foreign investors.

We can hardly overestimate the role of the private sector in the economy. In some countries, it generates more than half of GDP. In Belarus, the figure is barely half that but is rising, while the private sector employs almost a quarter of workers.

It makes sense to take on board world experience regarding laws, decrees and regulations. It appears that we're now witnessing entirely new relations between state powers and business. This is proven by the creation of a working group in Belarus aiming to stimulate business activity: a clear signal of the state's readiness to simplify and limit inspections, while optimising normative requirements and administrative procedures.

All are important steps towards the development of good neighbourly relations and fair economic competition. How can we accelerate in this direction, forming a competitive environment? And what is the role of the state in this process?

When strategies coincide

W

hen we compare conditions and rates of development between small businesses in Belarus and in other states, we should take into account that the economy in developed

countries, especially in the USA, has been growing for almost 200 years, relying on small enterprises. Meanwhile, our economy has been transforming for just twenty years, starting from enterprise-giants. As people in Odessa say, there's a world of difference. Mechanisms for efficient interaction between entrepreneurs, markets and the state haven't been completely established in our country, and causing various difficulties.

The creation of new jobs via the growth of small businesses and competition has been a priority in western countries, while preservation of existing jobs at large in-

dustrial enterprises remains our state priority, as does protecting the social sphere.

Belneftekhim, MAZ, MTZ, MZKT, BelAZ and other major enterprises are not merely major suppliers of currency but offer the guarantee of social stability. If they fall, they would bury the country's economy and all liberal endeavours. The experience of South Korea, China and other countries shows that economic transformation requires a gradual approach, colossal efforts and resources. A quick shift would cause unemployment and social instability.

Over the years of independence, much has changed for small businesses. Some have firmly grown within the economy. In such sectors as trade, provision of household and construction services, transport, information and consulting, the share of small businesses (including those owned by the state) accounts for between 50 percent and 80 percent (corresponding to European figures). The spheres of medicine, education, nursery education and scientific business are also being successfully mastered.



From Boris Panshin's point of view



At private furniture production enterprise, in Baranovichi District

Over the years of independence, much has changed for small businesses. Some have firmly grown within the economy. In such sectors as trade, provision of household and construction services, transport, information and consulting, the share of small businesses (including those owned by the state) accounts for between 50 percent and 80 percent (corresponding to European figures). The spheres of medicine, education, nursery education and scientific business are also being successfully mastered

Problems arise when the global policy of the state doesn't fit with the tactical interests of private businesses. For example, the strategy of pumping up the budget brought about high rates for leases and raised the cost of loans. The

strategy of security provision has led to a greater number of rules and inspections on their fulfilment. The strategy of protecting the internal market and preserving jobs at domestic enterprises contradicts the uncontrolled import of

fast-moving consumer goods, which are brought by entrepreneurs. The state hasn't hampered small businesses but has tried to build their development into the trajectory of state tasks.

When strategies coincide, development is rapid, bringing progress, variety and competition. A bright example is the High-Tech Park, where the strategy of IT business development coincides with the state's strategy on keeping highly-qualified specialists in the country. The same positive experience is seen in the establishment of private medical centres, agro-estates, filling stations and consulting companies. The state relies on dialogue with entrepreneurs to solve remaining contradictions, to ensure even greater progress.

One more complex task is to ensure fair competition and protection from monopoly. Private businesses, by nature, strive towards monopoly, seeking support and protection early on, while assuring society of their usefulness. However, once established, enterprises seek to push out weak rivals. Supporters of boundless freedom for entrepreneurship suddenly cry out to state bodies for help. Think of the situation with hypermarkets having snatched almost half of the nation's share of retail trade, instead of the 20 percent determined by law.

Hypermarkets are now so powerful that they're forcing suppliers to offer bigger wholesale discounts and violate terms of payment. A manufacturer may receive less than ten Kopecks from a single unit while the shop can earn 5-7-fold more. In order to survive, the producer has to raise its wholesale prices, leading to products becoming more expensive for customers and unprofitable for enterprises. If there is insufficient self-control and social responsibility from private businesses, state supervision weakens and mistakes are repeated. The process of liberalisation should be reliably managed, and directed constructively, with enterprises being shown how to act and how not to.

By Boris Panshin,
Professor at BSU's Economics Faculty

When you look deeper

What do Belarusian geologists find more often than oil and diamonds

Belarus is viewed as being poor in mineral wealth but geologists assert that, while we lack oil and natural gas, our commercial reserves of potassium salts are phenomenal: estimated at no less than 7 billion tonnes! Every year, we extract 45-50 million tonnes of this mineral, and export 5-6 million tonnes. It's no surprise that specialised organisations are tasked with improving our knowledge of the potential of our mineral resources and how these can be used to supply our domestic industrial needs.

We currently extract 1.6 million tonnes of oil annually, but as the Head of the Geology Department at the



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Target growth index for oil reserves stands at about

600
thousand tonnes a year



Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Sergey Mamchik, tells us, "We're aiming to raise this by about 600 thousand tonnes a year." He explains that, last year, the target was exceeded, by 124.7 percent. "How did we achieve this? We began working deposits with hard-to-extract reserves, alongside new ones. For example, Yuzhno-Shatilovskoye oil field, in the Gomel Region, is estimated to yield over \$100 million of oil: far more than the cost of geological exploration. Drilling a single well costs about \$2-2.5 million. In future, we'll consider another oil deposit in the Gomel Region, at Ugolskoye, where oil reserves are estimated at about 1.7 million tonnes.

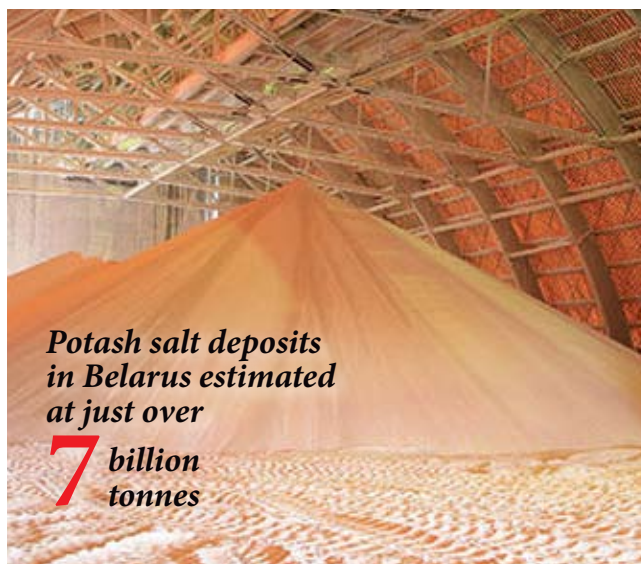
According to the Acting Deputy Director General of Belorusneft, Piotr Povzhik, the country has eighty-two identified oil fields, with about sixty being developed. The equipment used by the company is among the most advanced, including that produced in Belarus: longitudinal boring machines produced with Italian company Drillemec.



Ugolskoye oil deposit, in the Gomel Region, under assessment

"In 2017, we set ourselves ambitious goals, including increased field seismic operations, and a growth in reserves," he says. "We often discover new deposits with large capacity; however, they frequently fail to meet our annual needs for extraction. Recently, annual oil volumes have been extracted at a rate of no more than 60-65 percent of reserves. Accordingly, we're focusing on innovations."

Our scientists are working in collaboration with those from Russia and within the framework of Union State programmes, to provide geologists with the necessary innovations. In the near future, they should receive supercomputer 'SKIF-geo', to remotely solve a number of tasks relating to exploration. According to the Deputy Director General of the United Institute of Informatics Problems (UIIP), of the Academy of Sciences, Sergey Kruglikov, this supercomputer will be able to estimate deposits, and reduce the time spent on solving tasks, from 46-47 hours to 7-8 minutes."



Potash salt deposits in Belarus estimated at just over 7 billion tonnes

The country's economy is interested not only in oil but in minerals such as rock salt, chalk, sand, and sand-gravel mix. Sergey Mamchik tells us that these are being extracted for domestic enterprise needs, with a certain volume destined for export. Last year, volumes of exported crushed stone exceeded those of 2015 by more than 2.5-fold, bringing in more than \$65 million for the country's treasury.

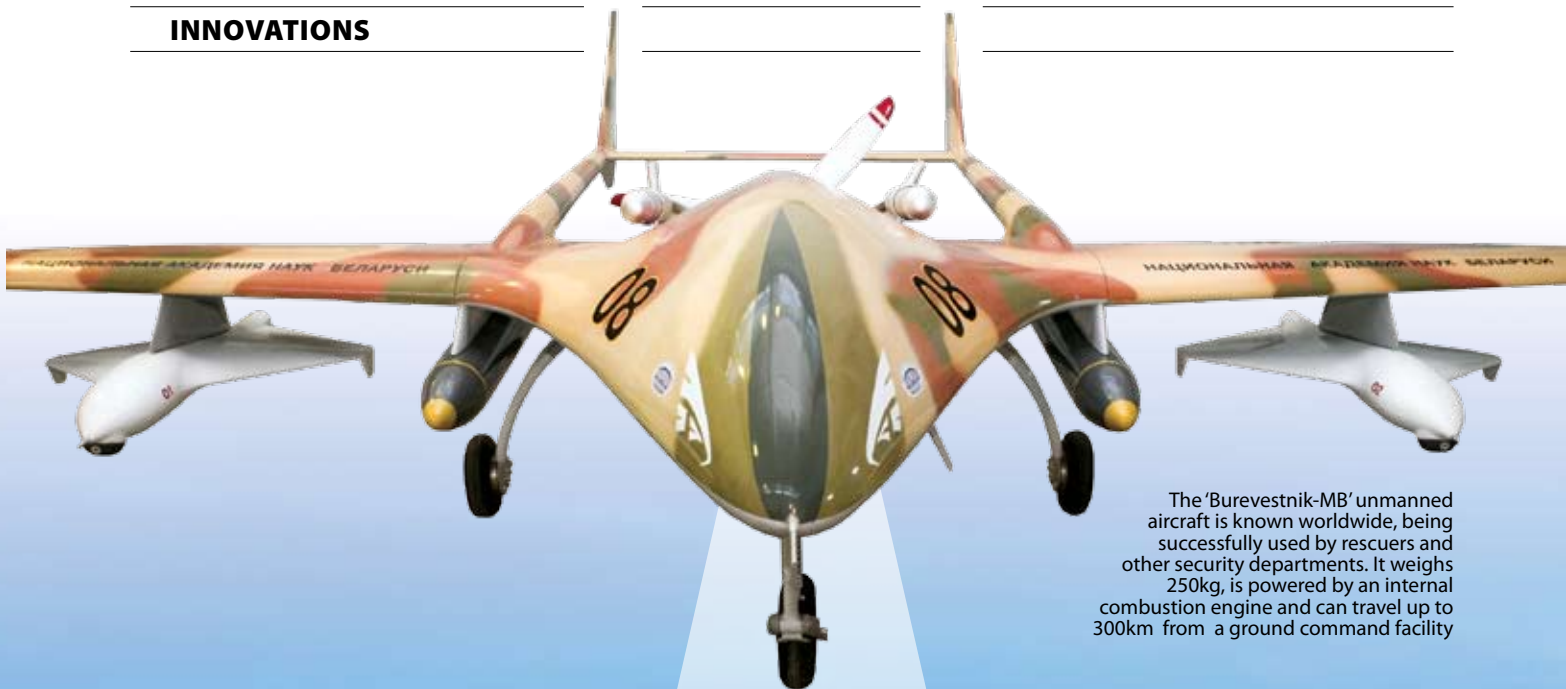
Geologists are certain that we need to better utilise the potential of mineral resources. For example, sapropel can be used to make fertilisers for export. Mr. Mamchik says, "Besides using them in our construction industry, we could export raw material basalts and sapropel. This became clear during visits by the Head of State to such countries as the Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. They have a certain interest in agricultural development. In the desert, you need to use organomineral fertilisers."

Investment projects to develop mineral deposits need our attention. For example, the project dealing with potash salt deposits alone is estimated at more than \$3 billion. It refers to the development of Petrikovskoye deposit and new sections at Starobinskoye.

The Institute of Geology, at the Geology Scientific and Production Centre, notes that we shouldn't ignore recycling of waste. Slag-heaps at open-cast mines for extracting stone, such as at Mikashevichskoye, can be utilised. Olga Berezko, the Director of the Institute, tells us, "In 2016, we received pre-production multi-purpose samples of silicate materials: clay products for building, mineral fibre, and ceramised glass. Their quality is as good as imported clay products."

Examination of recyclable materials will continue this year, at Diabazovoye deposit. Ms. Berezko explains that technological recommendations will be made on alternative and import-substitution raw materials from recycling.

By Veronika **Artemieva**



The 'Burevestnik-MB' unmanned aircraft is known worldwide, being successfully used by rescuers and other security departments. It weighs 250kg, is powered by an internal combustion engine and can travel up to 300km from a ground command facility

Drones see better from above

Mass production of quadcopters will begin at the end of the year in Minsk



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The devices will be produced not for entertainment, but for serious purposes. One type of drone will be able to conduct a high-quality survey in Full HD format at

up to 10km and will be of use to various ministries and departments. While the second model of unmanned aircraft will be helpful particularly to farmers by monitoring fields. Drone testing will be carried out in the summer and will appear on the market by the end of this year. Our correspondent has learnt the details of this new device.

Currently, the Research and Production Centre of Multipurpose Unmanned Systems of the NAS of Belarus is developing test samples. It is the company which produces brands recognised all over the world, such as 'Busel', 'Burevestnik' and 'Dirizhabl'.

"As well as deliveries of unmanned aircraft, we plan to develop their manufacture with potential customers. The list of buyers is constantly expanding and we hope that soon Ecuador may be among them," Alexander Shchavlev, Deputy Director of the Centre explained. "Many customers are interested in the modified 'Busel' model with a radius of up to 60km. It can contain equipment for photography-, video-, infra-red or multispectral survey. Our rescue teams also use them successfully in their work."

A new development for scientists — quadcopters, will facilitate the work of the border guards, police, plant and animal protection services and farmers. While a special line of drones is planned for the dispersal of fertilisers. "Spraying fields from the air will considerably reduce expenses, the equipment can also control the condition of farmland which will help to increase productivity," said Alexander Shchavlev. Quadcopters can fly at a height of up to 1km. Where chemicals are used however, it's important to ensure that they do not evaporate or go off target, so for this purpose the device will eas-

ily orientate itself very low over the ground — from 1 to 5 metres.

Earlier drones were not used in agriculture. Such functions were carried out by tractors and other manned machinery. Foreign countries have long ago examined this 'air' method but progress in the field is slow. Our development will be interesting for many buyers, including foreign markets.

Unlike popular unmanned aircraft, which fly at a speed of 60-120km/h, quadcopters have clear advantages. New developments mean that the device will be able to literally hang over the object. Previously such functions were only available with ecological monitoring devices based on an airship — its speed from 0 to 40km/h, but additional equipment for spraying fields, for example, cannot be added.

For high-quality monitoring, the drone size required is approximately 1.5m. For agricultural use this would be slightly larger. There is also a difference in weight: 5-8kg and over 25kg respectively. Popular drones seen in shops fly at up to 500m from the control panel. To control the drone properly, it should be within visual range. Our devices can fly large distances from 5 to 10km, thanks to full automatic systems."

The operator will be near a computer all the time to set the route and specify

points for certain tasks. Everything the drone sees will be transmitted to the operator's monitor in real-time. If needed, the operator could correct the drone or command an emergency landing. A farmer can observe the whole process and give recommendations on where best to direct the device.

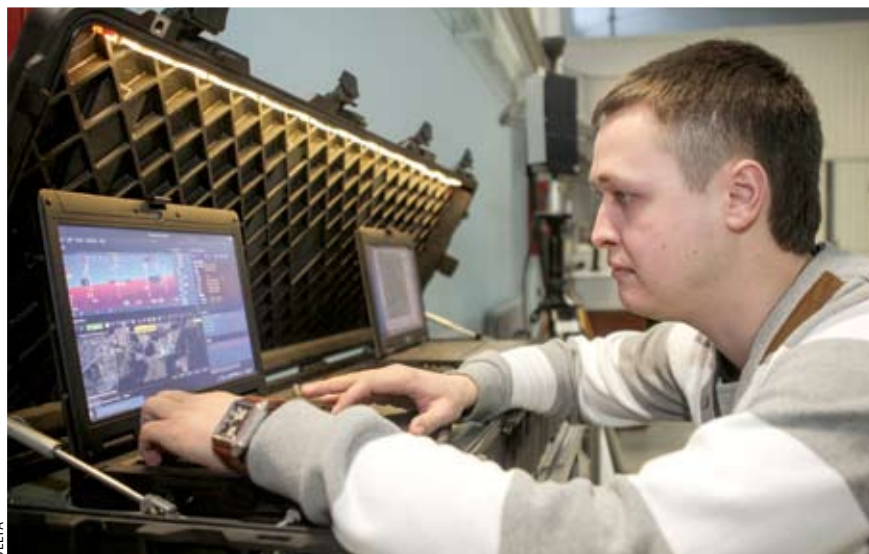
While the test models are being created, experts are counting the cost. "The price of the device for high-tech monitoring in the world market varies from \$70,000 to \$80,000. We plan to make the cost of our developments much lower," Alexander Shchavlev announced.

The model to meet the needs of farmers will cost nearly \$20,000. According to preliminary estimations, one flight of the drone will cost \$25-30. This is much less than the use of surface machinery or existing flying vehicles. A new device can pay for itself in one agricultural season.

Tests of quadcopter will be held in the summer, while mass production will begin at the end of this year. It is possible that, for these purposes, the number of personnel at the Centre, which now totals 80 people, will be increased. It is planned that experts will produce up to 30 of the newest flying devices each year.

Scientists also plan to create an unmanned helicopter to transport cargo and people.

By Yulia Popko



When controlling unmanned aircraft, the operator should be near a computer

New credit story

How are Belarusians directing their loans and why are banks setting tougher credit rules



Around 30 percent of borrowers apply for loans once or twice annually, with the same requesting credit once or twice per quarter. Twenty percent of people borrow money almost monthly, and around 16 percent every month

If you need a new phone, an apartment, a car or a seaside vacation but lack the cash, what can you do? It's common practice among Europeans and Americans, as well as the Japanese and our closest neighbours, to take out a loan, but Belarusians tend to be less keen. Only 20-25 percent of citizens have 'borrowed' bank funds. Very few fail to repay them, yet financial institutions continue to tighten the rules for allocating loans.

Despite a clear fall in average interest rates on new loans in 2016 (from 29.3 percent in January to 19.4 percent in December), these remain too high for most Belarusians. According to a joint study by the National Bank and the Alliance for Financial Inclusion, this is the key reason for avoidance of bank loans, as cited by 45.7 percent of respondents. Other oft-mentioned reasons are the desire not to be in debt to anyone and lack of money to repay loans.

A certain number of Belarusians still regularly borrow money from financial institutions, but with what purpose?

The largest share, 45.4 percent, takes out loans to pay for goods, repaying in instalments. Over 31 percent use loans to cover general expenses. Over the past four years, fewer loans have been issued for consumer needs, while payment in instalments has grown in popularity. Loans for housing construction, repair and vehicle purchase are the next most popular.

All those keen to apply for a loan are advised to look at their credit score, as made available by the National Bank around 18 months ago. Information is provided free of charge once a year, upon written request, with certain elements combining to create the 'score'. The Head of the National Bank's Credit Register Office, Victor Plenkin, explains that the credit register keeps information on all banks and microfinance institutions (MFIs). Leasing companies are soon to be added.

Evaluating the results of the past 18 months, Mr. Plenkin notes that 56 per-

cent of credit reports (as provided by the National Bank to users last December) were accompanied by a score (of 0-400). Mr. Plenkin adds that such data is not only of interest to creditors but helps in analysing the market. He tells us, "Since 2014, banks have been changing their policies and tightening requirements for borrowers. Loans are now only issued to clients who've undergone rigorous selection. Previously, most had B2 and B3 ratings; now, most are B1. The percentage of defaults on loans has fallen and few debts have needed to be written off."

The trend has been apparent since late 2014. Assessing the rating grade (from A to F), bankers rely on clear criteria, including the number of loans overdue for more than 90 days, 12 months after conclusion of a contract. In early 2014, problem clients stood at no more than 4.1 percent; now, the figure is even lower, showing how carefully borrowers are selected, and how disciplined applicants are in repaying their loans. Defaults are minimal, creating no threat to the banking system.

Some problematic cases remain, with many taken on by credit broker Procredit.by. It estimates that around 70 percent of its borrowers have previously been refused a bank loan or have outstanding debt at time of application. Director Igor Lushchik comments that

most seek funds to conduct house repairs, to buy a car or property, or to develop their business.

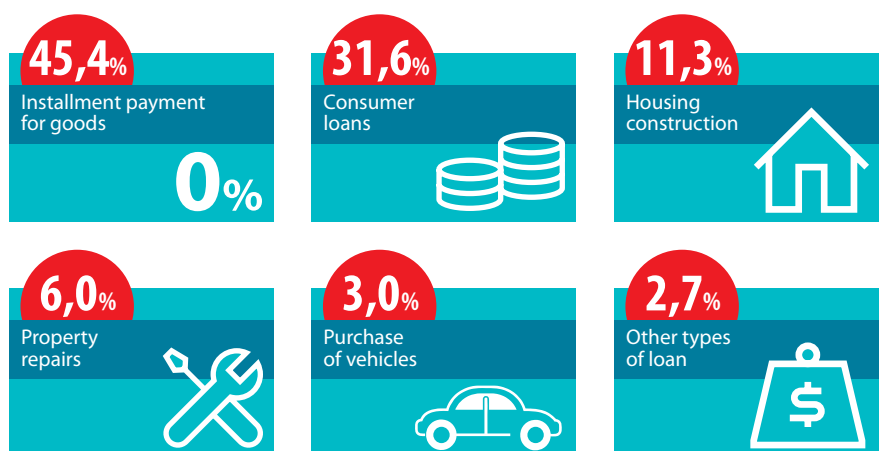
"If an applicant has failed to be granted a bank loan previously, they aren't 'tainted'. There are so many reasons for refusal, including having relatives who've failed to repay loans in the past, and insufficient solvency. However, most of our clients have failed to pay their debts in a timely fashion," he notes.

According to Mr. Lushchik, those with old debts and conflict with their bank don't have a chance of being granted a new loan. However, lawyers can develop a 'road map' for debtors, to help them resolve conflict with a financial institution, correct their credit history and receive new funds.

Mr. Plenkin disagrees, saying, "If a bank rejects a loan application, it's for a reason: not to bring harm but because it's assessed the risk. Clients aren't always able to calculate their ability to repay correctly. If a bank assesses your credit score and decides only to offer half of the loan applied for, it's because they think it's a more reasonable amount for repayment. It's unwise to seek loans regardless of ability to pay, or terms offered. On being refused, you may address unregistered organisations but these, sadly, sometimes operate fraudulent schemes."

By Olga Valchenko

How loans are used, across country's regions



NADEZHDA PONKRATOVA



VLADIMIR SHLAPAK

Plenty is no plague

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Belarus is one of the most trouble-free countries in the world in terms of provision of food safety

To achieve this high accolade, Belarusian agrarian workers had to work hard. And though the country was not subject to product sanctions, the climate remained the severe enemy of villagers. As scientists say, Belarus is a zone of unstable agriculture. Each year is different, and the harvest cannot be planned. Pessimists have always asserted that the agriculture of Belarus is a burden on the state budget, and investing money into the agrarian and industrial complex is tantamount to digging money into the soil.

Accommodation lures people into villages

After the collapse of the USSR and a long period of turbulence in the Belarusian economy, it was necessary to improve and develop agriculture. Since the mid-90's, the authorities have supported villages in various ways, with grants and preferential loans for agricultural enterprises. This policy was repeatedly criticised even though grant-aid is common in European agriculture. In Germany, 600 Euros are allocated for every hectare of farmland, while in Belarus this figure in 2014 was about 100 Euros. Regard-

less of the money, personnel are the essential element in the development of farming. "Cottages which appeared in agro-towns in the early 21st century were named as 'presidential houses'. Houses with utility lines and landscaped gardens allowed people to see rural life differently and to stay to work on the land. "In 1996-2000 we solved the problem of food safety and fed the population. In 2001-2005 we increased manufacturing and entered foreign markets," recollected the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko.

During the last decade, the country invested in innovations in the agro-industrial complex. Automated farms

and storehouses appeared and thanks to the state programme of revival and development of villages it was possible to construct almost one and a half thousand agro-towns.

The main consequence of these village reforms however, was that the country has not only replenished its coffers but also secured a foothold in the world market of 63 countries.

There is a dairy lake!

Today the share of agriculture in the GDP is approximately 7-8 percent. For comparison, in the European Union it is just 3 percent.

In 2015, the country was in 3rd place in the world for butter exports. It is one of the results of long-term work. Now only the European Union and New Zealand are ahead of us — both serious players in the dairy market.

Domestic enterprises produce 743kg of milk per capita, three times more than the norm. Surpluses are delivered to foreign markets — about 70 percent of the milk made in the country. Each year Belarus earns hundreds of millions of Dollars on the export of dairy products, and other foodstuffs.

Similarly, the meat market of Belarus is considered the most advanced in the CIS by volume. 26 large meat-processing plants and 450 enterprises in various forms of ownership are engaged in meat processing.

“The problem of food safety in the quantitative plan was solved during realisation of the programme of the revival and development of villages. Now Belarus fully complies with the requirements for foodstuffs. More than thirty products made in the country are exported. It is a planned surplus,” says Chairman of Presidium of NAS, Vladimir Gusakov.

There is no meal without bread

In 2014, there was record production of grain crops in Belarus of 9.1 million tonnes. But people say that Belarus is a country of unstable agricul-

ture: there can be drought or torrential rains, hailstones, and the harvest may be ruined. Food safety regulations also insist that fields and plants are processed according to advanced technologies against weeds and diseases, in order that the seed fund was not only elite from the point of view of productivity, but also cold-resistant and resistant to drops in temperature. Several scientific research institutes are working on this.

The use of new varieties yielded fruit. The country has become an exporter of grain crops on a small scale. In the 2015-2016 ‘trading’ year, according to FAO, deliveries abroad amounted to about half a million tonnes.

Sanctions have not become a barrier

The European Union and the USA introduced sanctions in relation to a variety of Belarusian companies and citizens in 2006. They did not concern deliveries of foodstuffs directly, but affected the interests of large business, complicated inflow of investments and the development of new technologies.

Sanctions became one of the indirect reasons which gave a boost to the development of manufacturing of agricultural machinery. Today the country produces machinery of high quality in such quantity which makes it possible not only to provide for our own crops, but also to deliver machinery for export.

By Vasily Malashenkov

From the Concept of Belarus' National Food Safety:

‘Complexities in the foodstuffs market are aggravated. Food manufacturing is slowly increasing in features of food safety. This requires a co-ordinated policy and joint practical actions of the world community. But this is unlikely to happen at a global level in the immediate future. Each country, including Belarus, has to solve the problem of foodstuffs on the basis of its own manufacture with maximum guarantees of safety’.

Word-for-word

The member of the Council of the Republic and head of the most successful Belarusian agricultural company Agrokombinat Snov, Nikolay Radoman says,

“Belarus has no problems with food stocks. The question is how to sell goods, and to have added value at the expense of exports. We are working on the geographical expansion of deliveries. It is difficult to compete with Germany and Switzerland where agrarian workers receive huge grants of 600 Euros for each hectare, but we do not complain, we carry on regardless.”





Education from a distance

Lessons online are convenient, letting us define our schedule and venue

‘What’s a Webinar?’ most of our students would ask. Electronic education is yet to hit Belarus, even though we’re all familiar with laptops, tablets, smart phones, and the Internet. Electronic education involves so much more than simply the use of multimedia: electronic blackboards and

Powerpoint presentations. Clearly, we have some learning to do.

Victoria Verameichik and Anna Mikhalenko, second-year students at the Belarusian State Pedagogical University (named after Maxim Tank), have been surveying pupils, students and teachers, as part of

their ‘Didactics of Network Lessons’ project. They’ve asked about attitudes towards electronic education, how often people use the Internet and for what purpose, how information-communication technologies are being developed in the school environment, and attitudes towards

information technologies, including how they could influence the future role of teachers.

Anna Mikhalenko tells us, “When we discussed using information technologies in education, for example, network lessons and lectures, opinions were divided. Though, of course, ‘pros’ prevailed. Why? Because lessons using information technologies are convenient: you can choose your schedule and venue. Almost 60 percent of respondents singled out this possibility.

There are also other advantages. Network lessons aren’t simply recorded lessons; you can see and hear a teacher, while the teacher sees and hears you. Almost 50 percent of men liked the idea, which allows education from any location, including

large attendance, making them something new.

The Belarusian State Pedagogical University (named after Maxim Tank) uses a network to offer study with the Physics and Mathematics Department. Its Social-Pedagogical Technologies Department (which predominantly enrolls women) is yet to launch such classes, but that may yet change.

Victoria Verameichik tells us, “The department has opened a resource centre of electronic materials, allowing for remote learning via online lectures and online conferences.”

Students are keen to see more lessons and subject offered online, allowing them to interact with other people and to keep abreast of innovations, helping in self-development.

Almost every establishment of higher education now offers remote learning, enabling individual students to gain access. However, network lessons are intended for large attendance, making them something new for our country

from other continents. 26 percent of respondents showed interest in lectures by foreign teachers, all enjoyed from the comfort of the sofa or armchair.

A few disadvantages were also mentioned: fears that technologies deprive us of live dialogue, that children’s socialisation could be jeopardised; that remote learning cannot cover the same ground as traditional methods; and that online teaching cannot allow for the same degree of question asking.

Almost every establishment of higher education now offers remote learning, enabling individual students to gain access. However, network lessons are intended for

The system could also be used for teachers to chat with pupils’ parents: very useful for those unable to attend meetings in person. Victoria adds, “In our work, such communication is vital. I’d willingly use it, especially if I worked in the countryside. It would allow me to consult with other teachers and debate issues online.”

Other students agree that electronic education offers possibilities. The full benefits of the Internet are far from being utilised. In truth, many only use it for entertainment.

“There’s such potential!” Anna asserts. “If we use the Internet for education and development, we’ll be more effective.”

By Vera Antonovskaya

Reference

■ **The market for online educational services is growing steadily. The Teacher Training Department of Texas University, in El Paso (USA), conducts around half of its basic educational courses online. Many of the world’s leading universities are doing so, creating a consortium of remote learning courses, initiating special programmes of support and carrying out online courses, as well as developing new tools for online educational systems.**

■ **Sceptics say that such distance learning cannot replace traditional learning. The Gallup Institute’s interview of the presidents of several American universities showed that 54 percent of participants somewhat disagreed or were unsure that such courses promoted a creative teaching strategy. Moreover, 83 percent disagreed or were unsure regarding online courses’ ability to improve education for all students.**





Millions of people in stadiums, gyms, and on running machines

**Major campaign to battle bad habits began
in 1990s in Belarus**

All ministries and departments have been involved in the national campaign to promote physical culture and sports, as detailed in the five-

year programme for social-economic development and in the national strategy for sustainable development. Much has now become government policy, encouraging healthy living through involvement in sports, giving up bad habits, healthy eating and preventive medicine.

One in five Belarusians take regular physical activity, and the target is 'one in four' by 2020. It seems highly likely that we'll meet the goal, having thousands of new and upgraded stadiums, offering ice rinks, cycle tracks, roller tracks and various pitches and courts for games. There is even an area for parkour in Minsk.



Minsk' group, on social networks, allows members to receive advice from professional athletes, who encourage would-be joggers. Hundreds of people run in city parks and school stadiums in the evenings.

Since 2009, Minsk authorities have been encouraging the capital in being 'bike-friendly', promoting a healthy lifestyle, easing the strain on public transport and improving the urban ecological environment. There are 200km of cycle tracks in Minsk, with 600km planned. Pavements are often divided into pedestrian and cycle sections.

"Just 1 percent of Minsk-ers bike to work, however," says Yuri Vazhnik, Chairman of the Board of the Belarusian Transport Association. "Statistics are encouraging though, since the number of cyclists in Belarus has tripled over the past five years."

'Attacks' on bad habits are occurring on all fronts, with people responding to surveys which show that the main reason for early death in men is an unhealthy lifestyle. About one-third of the adult population smokes, with the highest percentage among young people and the middle-aged. Alcohol consumption is also quite high, at over ten litres per capita annually.

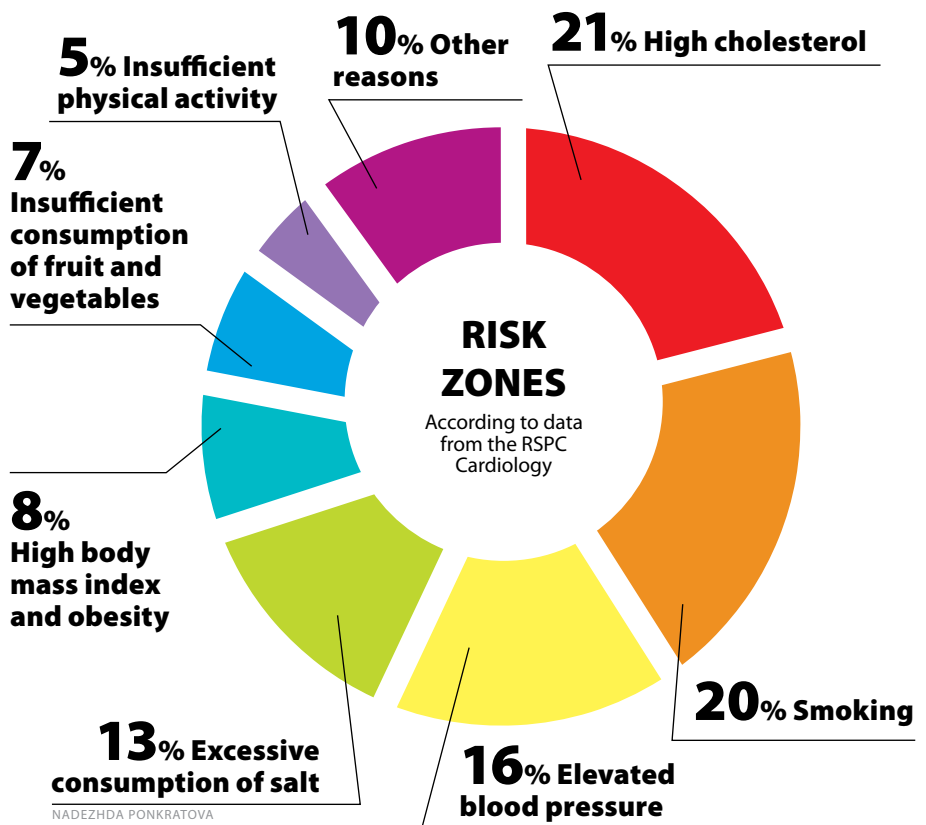
Belarus has banned tobacco advertising, with cigarettes no longer displayed in shops: customers are rather given a catalogue-list. For several years, drinking beer on the street has been banned, and it's forbidden to sell alcohol or cigarettes online. The Interior Ministry recently suggested legislating that alcohol be sold only to people over the age of 21 years. Public opinion polls show that 75 percent of the population supports tougher anti-tobacco and anti-alcohol campaigns.

Over the past twenty years, Belarus has built about twenty ice palaces, and thousands of amateurs countrywide now play ice hockey. The Night Hockey League, and Minsk Ice Hockey Amateur Championship, the Amateur Hockey League, and the 'Golden Puck' tournament have proven popular, as have various other Republican competitions.

The country has also revived the Olympic Reserve School in each district, and Minsk hosts a winter swimming championship. This year, Russians from Orel, Ivanovo and other cities took part.

Sports holidays have been traditional in Minsk and across other cities, dedicated to Victory Day and Independence Day, on 3rd July. On these days, the centre of the capital becomes a huge stadium, filled equally with athletes and spectators.

Belarus is seeing a huge trend for running, with a great many races held annually; Minsk's international half marathon is among them. 'Follow-



Theatre teaching itself



Tamara Gorobchenko (with flowers)
among graduate theatricologists (2013)

Do we need theatrical criticism? How prestigious is the profession of theatre critic and what is theatre science? Critic Tamara Gorobchenko, who has a Ph.D. in Art History, shares her thoughts.

Belarusian theatre critics view theatrical science as having appeared at the beginning of 20th century in Belarus, when professional state theatres began to open. Though research in the field of theatrical creativity wasn't abundant, and was fragmentary in character, it shows us how theatre was growing in the wider context of national culture, including the rapid development of amateur creativity.

Various enthusiastic and emotional reports exist regarding theatrical discoveries within the Belarusian theatre world, its triumphs and failures. In many respects, these derive from the earlier work of well-known Belarusian workers of art, such as Vladislav Syrokomlya, Yazep Dyla, Yanka Kupala, Yakub Kolas, and Zmitrok Biadulya. Their research into national forms of theatre, folklore representations, dramatic art, and amateur performances shaped the development of professional theatrical art.

Comprehending world theatrical culture, they offered their own view of the development of Belarusian

theatre, and its national characteristics. In his 'Our Theatre' article of 1913, writer, folklore specialist and literary critic Maxim Goretzky detailed a plan of development for the national theatre, which remains relevant today.

Studying the history of national theatrical culture was a priority in the early 1920s. As a school pupil at the time, I wondered why I needed to read literary and theatrical critiques, believing that their opinions would have nothing to do with my own. I continued to think that way even at university, while studying with the Philology Department. Only after having worked in the theatre sector of

the Institute of Art Studies, Ethnography and Folklore of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus (now, the Theatrical Art Department), and having completed my postgraduate studies, and defended my master's thesis on the theme 'Zmitrok Biadulya — Theatrical Critic and Publicist', did I appreciate the relevance!

Critics investigate not only the origin and development of theatre, but its role in public life. Theatre science is an elite area of cultural consciousness, in which I've found that arguments do sometimes chime with my own, helping me understand the personality of an artist, his talent and the value of his creativity. Theatrical

Their sensitivity allows them to see the essence of a story, to see the heart of the concepts being explored. Often, critics are aware of more than the scriptwriter, being able to view from a position of objectivity. I've experienced this myself, with the author of a play telling me, 'You know, I didn't think about it that way while I was writing...'

Critics are helpful to theatre professionals, helping them to understand the nuances of their craft as even they, sometimes, are unaware of. Directors and actors can be inspired by the angle presented by a critic. Not that critiques should be used to change the way a perform-

My time with the theatre department lasted only briefly, while I was defending my master's thesis. I cannot claim to be a fully-fledged theatre critic. Accordingly, Tamara Gorobchenko, who has written papers on theatre science and theatrical criticism, is here to share her knowledge. She has written the two-volume encyclopaedia 'Theatrical Belarus', and many chapters in the 'History of Belarusian Theatre', in three volumes, as well as monographs on masters of the Belarusian stage.

Ms. Gorobchenko, are you a theatre critic or more of an academic?

More likely, something in between; in Soviet times, they were the same thing, and I continue to think so. Theatre critics write about the history of the theatre, and about modern theatre. They touch on history, as well as the problems facing us today. We need to preserve this unique profession, which appeared in the 19th century and which few people pursue. Theatrical staging happens in real time, yet leaves no material trace. If theatre critics don't write about a performance, it disappears and is lost forever.

What about theatrical journalism?

The same applies, although it offers more of an emotional response, rather than objective analysis. Journalists take a more superficial view, giving a run down of the plot, with a summary of their personal response. However, will a journalist convey the figurative structure of a performance, so that, years later, we can appreciate its style and subject matter? Journalistic articles seldom look beneath the surface, at the more complex themes explored by the director, the stage designer, and actors. Of course, there are talented journalists, who try to explain the meaning behind a performance, to leave something for history, and there are bloggers.

I like how your colleague, Valentin Pepelyaev, works; he thinks associatively. It's interesting to read his

Criticism of art is one of the most ancient trades, existing since Aristotle. Theatres won't escape from it. It's good to have theatricologists and critics who are knowledgeable of modern theatrical processes, and who understand how the past has influenced the present, remembering the best stage traditions

critics help promote our understanding of our drama culture. They enrich our understanding through historical research and have relevance not just to students but to playwrights, directors, actors, and all who wish to reflect on this art form. There is so much to ponder, from performance to sets and costume. Meanwhile, our understanding of theatrical concepts helps us comprehend wider aspects of life.

Theatre critics, by nature, educate us. They have heightened sensibilities, looking inside the soul of a performance, and all its components, seeing aspects beneath the surface layers, as even stage directors miss.

ance is delivered, but artistes can learn and mature through reading such reports. The critic gains little recognition in return.

Tamara Gorobchenko once told me that 'a wise director communicates kindly with each theatrical critic, discussing his plans with them'. I remember theatre critics travelling to regional theatres, examining their repertoire, and inviting the whole troupe for discussion. I was a participant in several such trips. I remember how happy the artistes at the Yakub Kolas Theatre were, having someone take notice and chat to them. Even straight-talking criticism was useful to them.

column 'Slaves of the Stage', in 'SB. Belarus Segodnya'. He gives a mini-review of performances, and worthy analysis of staging, for true theatre lovers. As far as I understand, audiences, especially young ones, only attend the theatre if they've read positive reviews beforehand, usually online. However, unfortunately, today, it's rare to find strong, comprehensive reviews of performances. 'Mastatstva' magazine publishes them, from time to time. You used to be able to find two entirely disparate reviews. 'Kultura' newspaper reports mostly on premieres, but we lack any polemical publications, and truly analytical reviews. Portraits of actors are rare; instead, people tend to read interviews with them. We also have Irina Zavadskaya's 'Memory' column, on actors who've died.

I remember the time when newspapers used to set aside space for reviews, and I wrote a review of 'Threshold', by Alexey Dudarev, staged at the Yakub Kolas Theatre...

Theatrical observers used to do this for most of the newspapers. For example, weekly journal 'Litaratura i Mastatstva' reviewed performances in each issue. Boris Buryan headed the culture section at the time. It's easy to be nostalgic for the past but we now live in modern times. The reality is that life moves at a rapid pace these days, with its own rhythm and perceptions.

There are advantages to this as well as disadvantages. The figurative language of performances has changed, and the expressive means are different. Directors are using more complicated methods, assailing our senses more obviously. So, theatrical criticism needs to distinguish new ideas and decode them for the audience. Theatre critic veteran Tatiana Orlova does this well. She's to the point, keeping her reviews relevant.

The Belarusian Drama Theatre not long ago hosted free lectures, delivered by well-known theatri-

cal critics at the 'School of TEART', opened during the festival by the ART Corporation Centre of Visual and Performing Arts and ticket booking operator Bycard.by.

I heard about this educational programme from my post-graduate students. It aimed to promote appreciation and enjoyment of modern theatre. Senior BSU teacher and theatre critic Lyudmila Gromyko took part, recalling her experience of the last twenty-five years. She related tales of the metaphorical theatre of Valery Raevsky and Boris Gerlovan, and the theatrical aesthetics of Nikolay Pini-gin, who is now the Art Director of the Yanka Kupala Theatre.

Returning to theatre science, tell us about the components studied these days.

Dramatic art, performing arts, audiences, theatrical criticism and theatre science are the basic elements, and there are various structural subsections. We cover general theory and the history of the theatre, theatrical criticism, the sociology of the theatre, drama theory, directorial and acting skills, psychology and physiology of creativity and audience perception, theatrically-decorative art, background music for performances, theatrical pedagogics, stage techniques, and the practical, economic side of the theatre business. Theatre science is connected also with philosophy, sociology, aesthetics, psychology, folkloristics, literary studies and other interdisciplinary sciences.

How did Belarusian theatre history begin as a science?

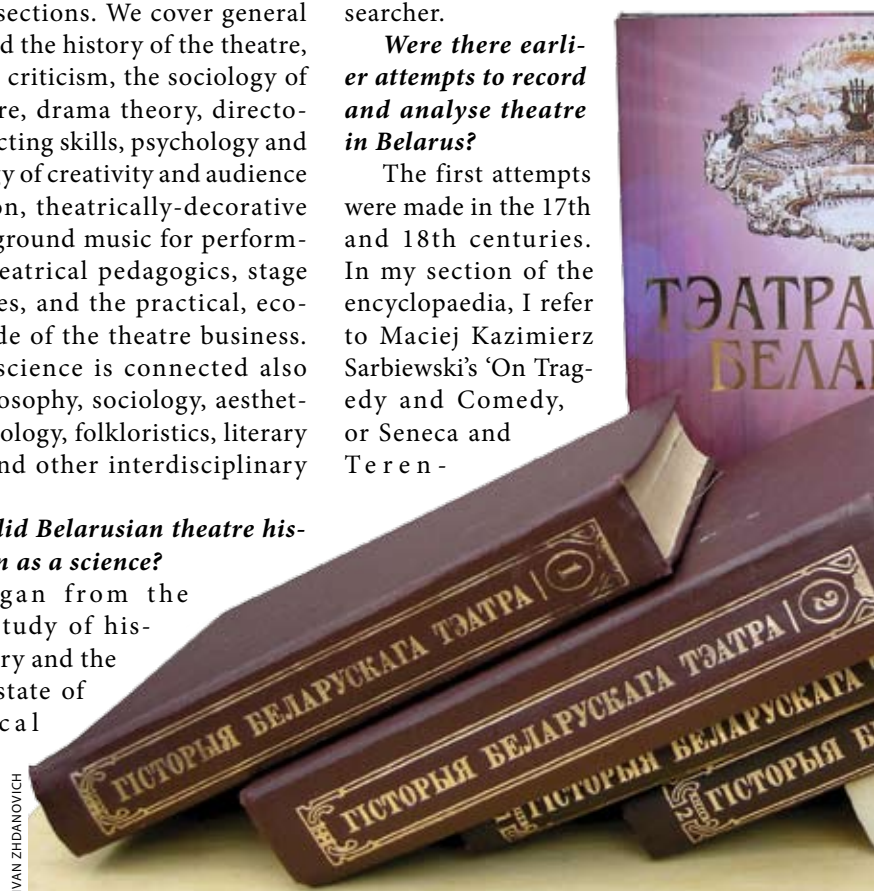
It began from the regular study of history, theory and the modern state of theatrical art. In 1957, the Institute of Art Stud-

ies, Ethnography and Folklore, at the Academy of Sciences of Belarus, instructed employees to collect materials for future research. In 1977, cinematography detached into a separate section and, since 1986, we've had our own theatre department. In 1995, it was renamed as the Department of Theatrical Art. Outstanding people have worked in our department, taking Ph.Ds and defending their doctoral theses. Sometimes, they've gone on to head the department, or have moved to work in other organisations.

Richard Smolsky, Doctor of Art History, undertook full-time post-graduate studies with us, and defended his Ph.D. thesis. Now, he holds a doctorate in art history and is a professor. From 1988, he headed the Department of Theatrical Art and was simultaneously Rector of the Academy of Arts. These days, he works there as a researcher.

Were there earlier attempts to record and analyse theatre in Belarus?

The first attempts were made in the 17th and 18th centuries. In my section of the encyclopaedia, I refer to Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski's 'On Tragedy and Comedy, or Seneca and Teren-



tius'. He wrote this from the lectures he gave at Polotsk's Jesuit Collegium. It's a textbook on theatre, giving advice on stage performances, accompanied by sketches of stage equipment.

Duke Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł, Voivode of the Vilnius Voivodeship and Hetman of Lithuania, wrote about the performances given at Urszula Radziwiłł's Nesvizh theatre, between 1720 and 1761. In the 19th century, there were a number of publications about city life, including articles on the theatres of Minsk, Vitebsk and Grodno, describing theatrical buildings, repertoires and the structure of troupes touring the country.

As to criticism, the most outstanding personalities of that period were famous ethnographer and folklore specialist Pavel Shpilevsky, and public figure Ivan Golts-Miller (his father). While looking at each actor's mastery, they aimed to educate people about the theatre and widen its

popularity.

Zmitrok Biadulya, an outstanding writer, playwright and theatrical critic for 'Nasha Niva', from 1912-1915, did a great job of promoting awareness of theatre life, and continued writ-

ing theatrical reviews for many years afterwards. Biadulya urged Maxim Goretzky to create plays on the theme of Belarusian Renaissance.

Meanwhile, the Theatre Department of the Institute for Belarusian Culture (1922-1928) was engaged in research into performance art, producing reports on the performances and repertoire of theatres, including the activity of Belarusian and Jewish studios in Moscow.

You were among the first taught in 'theatrical criticism'. Is the subject popular today?

Theatrical criticism, as an educational subject, was first introduced into Belarus' educational syllabus in 1962, when the Theatre Art Institute first took students for this speciality, myself among them. The subject developed before my eyes. Today, there's a new speciality, called 'management and organisation of theatrical business'.

What can you tell us about your colleagues?

They are versatile experts, simultaneously critics, academics and teachers. Today, we have few such people. Speaking about the senior generation, we have such doctors of sciences as Richard Smolsky, Tatiana Orlova, and Vadim Saleev. Some go to work in theatres, in the literary department or marketing department, while others become press secretaries or go into television or journalism. Many of my colleagues have died. Among them I can name Vladimir Nefed, who was a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, a doctor of art history, a professor, and a laureate of the state award.

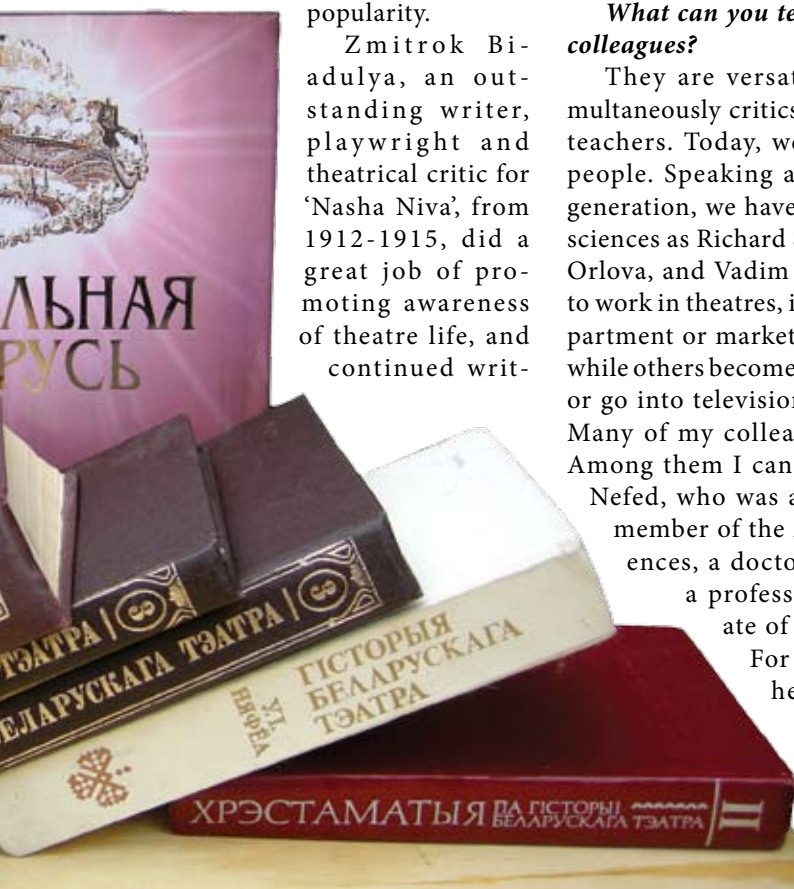
For thirty years, he headed his theatre department (1957-1987), making a huge contribution to theatre science.

I didn't always agree with him, as he was such an ardent advocate for moral ideas and the creation of a positive image for stage heroes, but he achieved a great deal. He was a founder of the Belarusian State Theatre Art Institute [the Academy of Arts] and of the Belarusian Theatrical Society [now, the Union of Theatrical Workers]. He wrote books about the theatre, including a tutorial for students of creative universities and institutes, and he headed a group of authors in creating the three-volume 'History of Belarusian Theatre'.

Prof. Anatoly Sobolevsky has also died. He was a doctor of art history, and a former chancellor of the Academy of Arts, holding the post for five years. My colleagues called him a coryphaeus of theatrical science. He was one of those rare men who had a deep understanding of theatre history, and wrote numerous books investigating dramaturgy, the art of acting, and international theatrical ties. He edited the second and third volumes of 'The Reader of Belarusian Theatre', and the 'Theatrical Belarus' encyclopaedia, in two volumes (without rival across the post-Soviet space).

Sobolevsky co-ordinated the collection and cataloguing of materials, and helped set up the 'Theatrical Creativity' magazine, which was published from 1992 until 1998, devoted to dramaturgy, and professional and amateur performing arts. I could talk about him for ages, as he was my research advisor for my first diploma thesis, and then for my Ph.D. thesis.

I love recalling my colleagues, who were engaged in various directions of theatrical art, and with whom I worked in the theatre department for many years. We were connected not only by trade, but by friendship. I recall fondly Professor Guryi Baryshev, who was a doctor of art history, and candidates of art history Yuri Pashkin, Mikhail Kolodinsky, and Sergey Petrovich. I cherish their memory.





First graduates of Theatrical Art Department with their teachers, near the Academy of Sciences

The first volume of the three-volume 'History of Belarusian Theatre' was issued in 1983. Some years later came the other volumes. Tell us about this work.

It was the first of its kind for art history sciences, making a special contribution to the cultural life of Belarus, and domestic art history. Theatricologists analysed the performing arts and their place within the spiritual culture of Belarus. We investigated the national features of professional Belarusian theatre, which has a unique aesthetic platform. It's deeply democratic.

The history of Belarusian theatre covers a wide panorama, including skomorokhs (wandering minstrel-clowns), national drama, batleika, school and serfdom-based theatres, amateur theatre and early professional theatre. It also covers the leading national collectives: the Yanka Kupała Theatre; the Yakub Kolas Theatre; Vladislav Golubok's drama troupe; the Young Spectators' Theatre; Russian, Polish and Jewish companies;

theatres working with young people; regional and collective-farm/state-owned farm theatres; and the theatre life of Western Belarus.

'The History of Belarusian Theatre', for the first time in Belarusian theatre history, thoroughly examines poly-ethnic theatrical cultures, showing how they interact and mutually enrich one another.

Isn't the book full of Soviet ideology?

It is what it is, having been born of the social and political ideology of the Soviet period. All books from that period share the same outlook. It's why our institute began working on the multi-volume 'Belarusians', devoted to certain areas of creativity. The last, thirteenth volume, presents a complex investigation of the theatrical art of Belarus, up until 2010. Its authors have rethought former estimations. Lyudmila Klimovich, who has a Ph.D. in Art History is now working on a programme and tutorial for 'Theatrical Criticism'.

What are theatricologists doing in the art department today?

Since 2010 the department has been headed by Veronika Yarmolin-skaya, who has a Ph.D. in Art History, and who's a senior lecturer. Our last major publication, as I mentioned, is the thirteenth volume of 'Theatrical Art'. In 2014, together with the cinema department, we issued 'Modern Theatrical and On-screen Arts: Traditions and Innovation'. The theatrical chapters are devoted to new research into modern theatre science. In particular, it considers children's dramaturgy: modern directions and theory and practice. The department plans to release an edition entitled 'The National Academic Yanka Kupała Theatre in the 20th-21st Century', in time for the 100th anniversary of professional theatre.

What can you say about modern theatrical criticism and theatre science in Belarus?

Times are changing, and theatricologists and theatrical critics must master new ways of connecting with the public and with theatres: online, and using the radio and television. Young critics, like Kristina Smol-skaya, Ksenia Dubovskaya and Alexey Strelnikov, work closely with the media, finding a niche successfully. It's harder for old-timers.

I've already spoken about the difference between theatrical criticism and theatre science; the profession is transforming. The newspaper criticism of my youth has lost its authority, replaced by bloggers. There's nothing terrible in this; it's all critique. Theatre science hasn't disappeared, and won't, unless we lose theatre as an art form.

Criticism of art is one of the most ancient trades, existing since Aristotle. Theatres won't escape from it. It's good to have theatricologists and critics who are knowledgeable of modern theatrical processes, and who understand how the past has influenced the present, remembering the best stage traditions.

By Valentina Zhdanovich

World opens up when we read



International Radio Belarus conducts 'My Book for the Whole World' photo contest, dedicated to 500th anniversary of Belarusian and Eastern Slavonic book printing

In organising a contest of creative works, 'My Book for the Whole World', Belarusian journalists have tried to show the role of books in contemporary life, and the diversity of the world literary palette, while promoting knowledge of the history and culture of Belarus.

"The 500th anniversary of Francysk Skaryna's printing of 'The Psalter' will be widely celebrated by the global cultural community. This is one of the most important dates in Belarusian culture and part of world book history. Participation in the contest enables worldwide listeners of our radio station to share their favourite books and to learn about book printing traditions around the globe. They can share their literary preferences and those books which

have influenced their outlook or which have special significance for them, connected with memories," notes the Chief Director of International Radio Belarus, Naum Galperovich.

To take part in the contest, just send your book photo to booksglobal@gmail.com, with a comment, before April 30th. Your picture can be in the form of a selfie or in any other format. Creativity will be taken into consideration, including originality of composition.

All photos will then appear on the Radio Belarus website — www.radio-belarus.tvr.by, under #booksglobal — where votes may be cast, from Internet users and a professional jury. Results will be announced in May 2017.

Terms and conditions are available on the official website of International Radio Belarus.



Participants of the contest: Poland's Jarosław Jędrzejczak and 'The New Land' by Yakub Kolas; Mitul Kansal, India, with a book of his own poems; Hamzawy Mahmoud, Egypt

Tale of Skaryna, written by twelve hands

Zvyazda Publishing House releases book for children — ‘Visiting Francysk Skaryna’ — by Yeva NEMM, to mark jubilee

The mysterious pseudonym conceals a whole family: writer Yelena Stelmakh, her daughters Victoria and Margarita, and granddaughters Emilia, Maria and Nadezhda. They here explain how they invented their fairy tale.

In line with ancient legends

Did you prepare the magic story of Francysk Skaryna specially for the anniversary?

Victoria: It's a coincidence. Nobody thought of the book printer initially. We went to the village of Stankovo, near Minsk, with the girls and

they became bored, asking me to tell them something interesting. I invented a story about hero Alovak's adventures around the world, and across the ages, adding Belarusian legends. On learning of this, my mother became inspired and proposed writing a book together.

Yelena: Skaryna was then ‘born’. The girls were very much interested in the history of the first printer, wondering why not a single book had existed until then — even the smallest. We agreed, unanimously, to tell all children about this legendary figure. As a result, we sent the book characters to Skaryna's print shop.

Do all your characters have prototypes?

Yelena: Duke Emeryk and his estate —

where the plot is concentrated — is based on notorious Duke Emeryk Hutten-Czapski, who owned Stankovsky estate in the 19th century. Reader visiting that unique Belarusian village will recognise the building we've described and the al-tana on the lake bank, as well as the trees growing with their roots upwards, and the lime tree, where crow Karrilla lives. They'll probably find the bird itself!

Maria: We invented our characters together. When I was little, I loved milk pudding — calling it ‘pundik’. I couldn't pronounce the word correctly. The same name was given to our cactus on the windowsill, which later became a fairy tale character.

Emilia: The rabbit in the book is



Minsk family invent magical stories while drinking tea: Margarita, Emilia, Yelena, Nadezhda, Victoria, and Maria (from left to right)

also taken from real life. It's our pet, Rosochka.

Margarita: We're often asked where the funny name of Alzhbeta's friend, Yaitska, came from. We were once travelling by car and it was hot and stuffy. To have fun, we read advertising signs from right to left. One of the stands said 'Akt-siya', which became Yaitska backwards. We later decided to use this cute name for our character.

Children's imaginations seem far richer than adults'...

Yelena: That's right. When I became stuck for ideas, I visited the grandchildren with treats, and they produced a great deal of material. They weren't really bothered by the cakes. Rather, as soon as they saw me at the door, they'd asked about the new chapters. We'd go to their room, pull up a chair and I'd read. After hearing my story, they'd help invent new adventures for the characters.

Shared pseudonym

It's not always easy for women to work together. Have you ever fallen out?

Yelena: We did while trying to take a family photo for the book cover! The girls chose the best place in our flat for the shot, and spent an hour in front of the mirror, trying on clothes and fixing their hair. That fuss ended in tears!

Who came up with the idea of using a pseudonym?

Yelena: The editors were hurrying us, saying that the book was ready and we needed to name the author. We organised a weekend meeting to decide and, while drinking tea in the kitchen, Emilia, who's always full of idea, suggested her own name, declaring that it had been her idea to put lots of magic in the book. The others didn't agree but another idea was born — to name Victoria as the author, she being the first to suggest moving the story into the past. This also failed to meet with approval, so we took a clean sheet of paper and wrote: Yelena, Victoria, Nadezhda, Emilia, Maria, Margarita — creating the name Yeva NEMM. The abbreviation was immediately approved!

The letter 'a' here is for my granddaughter's father's name: Andrey. He patiently takes us to presentations and helps with props. It would be a true challenge for us — three ladies — to cope without his male assistance!



An excerpt from the book

— *Is this the real Francysk Skaryna?! Pinch me! — whispered rabbit Rosochka to Guzik, struck by what she saw.*

— *Oh, we have guests! — the delighted first printer exclaimed.*

— *Now, ladies and gentlemen, where are you from? — he startled the stunned newcomers with his loud voice.*

— *We're from the 21st century. — said Alovak, who turned out to be bolder than the others.*

— *You're truly far from home! There's a five hundred year difference between us.*

It was wise Skaryna's turn to be surprised. With open interest, he began asking questions of his guests from the future.

— *What's your life like? Do you have printing houses? Are books published? Do people read them?*

— *Everyone can read! — replied strutting cactus Pundik, maintaining his reputation as a scientist in front of Skaryna.*

— *So many books have been published that a person could live their whole life and not read them all.*

Francysk Skaryna could hardly imagine how his difficulties, as the first book

printer, would find fruition in bringing such education. He was inspired by the realisation that, after many centuries, books, those warehouses of knowledge, would be available to everyone. Children would call books their best friends. Really, all his efforts were not in vain.

What's the book about?

The plot takes place on Duke Emeryk's Stakhankovsky estate. His daughter Alzhbeta, with her friend, Yaitska, gardener Alovak, rabbit Rosochka, crow Karrilla and cactus Pundik, travel through time, with the help of a magic box. The cheerful company appears in the early 16th century, at Francysk Skaryna's printing house...

ABCs from St. Petersburg not enough for all

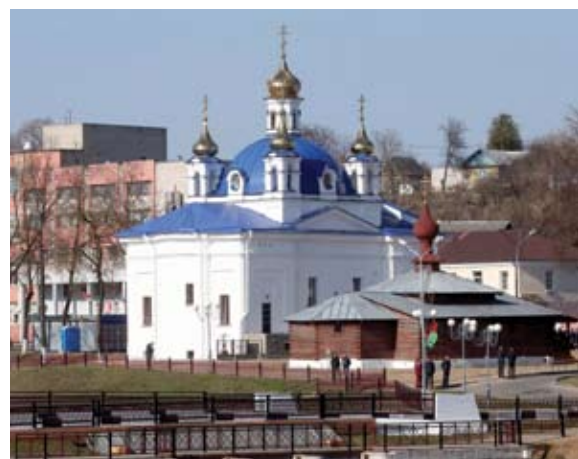
The pavilion of St. Petersburg publishing houses drew a crowd of children, eager to see editions of collected fairy tales and the special 'Fairy Alphabet', in full colour. Each of its letters is a work of art, with an encrypted Russian fairy tale: 'L' stands for Sister Fox, 'X' for Khavroshechka and 'II' symbolises The Frog Princess. The magic letters were drawn by famous artist Tatiana Mavrina. So many people were eager to buy a copy that it soon sold out.

Young readers were delighted with the theatrical performance of Belarusian writer Alena Maslo, who presented 'My Name is Lokhneska', which explores the adventures of a dinosaur in a Belarusian pond.

Older children were keen to meet famous writers Andrey Zhvarevsky and Yevgenia Pasternak. Many had already read their latest book — 'While I'm on Edge' — and were eager to share their impressions. Some fans even arrived in Minsk from Moscow.

During breaks between presentations, young book lovers crowded near the wooden printing press, recreated by historian Vladimir Lihodedov, without nails, relying on ancient engravings and drawings. Everyone had the chance of 'printing' a page from Skaryna's Bible.

By Irina **Mustafina**



Roads lead to Orsha

This ancient city is almost ten centuries old. It stands on the Dnieper River which is joined by the Orshitsa River.



Seeing the Eastern gates of Belarus

Orsha is a major transport link for the Russia-Europe-Ukraine circle. Napoleon stopped here in 1812, on his way to Moscow during the Patriotic War. He then appointed Marie-Henri Beyle as the city commandant; he later became known as the great writer Stendhal.

Orsha's railway station opened in 1871 and the building is now on the List of Historical-Cultural Treasures. Two monuments on the 'railway' theme are close to the station. One is devoted to a USSR Hero, an underground partisan brigade commander — Konstantin Zaslunov; several years before the war, he headed the local locomotive depot. The second monument is represented by a legendary Soviet locomotive: the P-36.

Visiting Jesuits

The Jesuit Collegium was established in 1612 by Lew Sapieha — a Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Children of all social backgrounds were taught at the monastery school, but 230 years later, the building was transformed into a city prison (which only closed in 1990.)

At present, this Baroque style monument is restored and, aside from its external appearance, it enjoys its initial purpose — acting as a cultural and educational centre. It now hosts a popular café, a children's library, a museum complex, an art gallery and the House of Crafts. Tourists visit in numbers and are keen to buy exclusive linen products at manufacturer's prices: the largest linen mill in the world operates in Orsha.

Whirling water wheel

The red brick building attracts immediate attention. It's an example of Gothic revival architecture, with elements of the pseudo-Russian style. The mill stands on an artificial canal and, many years ago, it was extremely powerful, operating a water wheel of 50HP. At present, it hosts the Mlyn Ethnographic Museum which features diverse exhibits such as ceramic and

household articles and working machinery from the early 19th century.

An ancient settlement is situated opposite the mill; it's an 11th century architectural monument. The city's life and history began here and the place is much appreciated by city residents and tourists, with photographers and artists being common visitors.

Reading ABC

Orsha is a city of monasteries and churches. The Ilyinskaya Church is much loved by local residents; it's already five centuries old and keeps the national treasure: Orsha's Icon of the Mother of God. According to legend, it suddenly emerged from nowhere when the Kuteinskaya Lavra

was being built.
In the 17th
c e n -

tury, it acted as the centre of Belarusian printing. Spiridon Sobol's ABC is the most famous book printed there. It spread all over the world from its Orsha origins. A monument was recently erected to honour the edition: a title page made in marble.

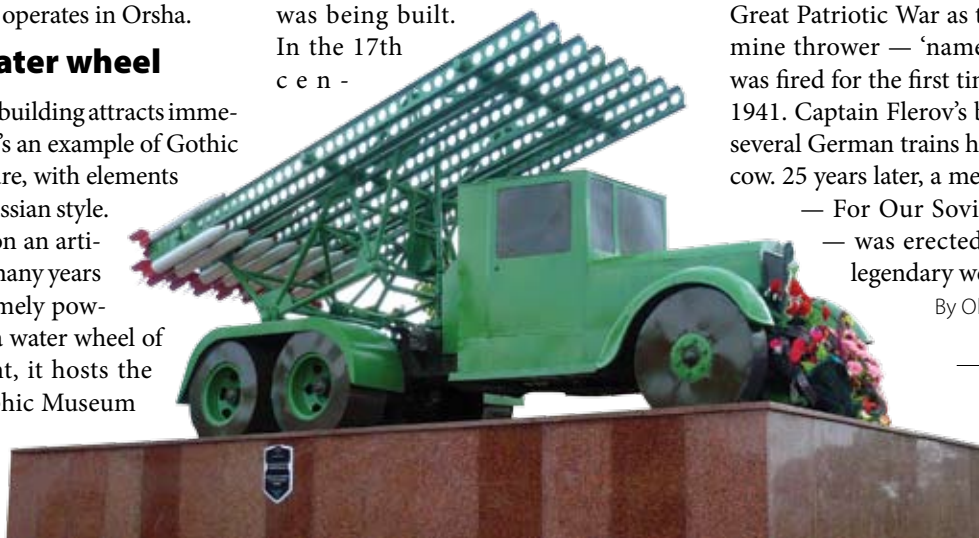
Orsha is known not only for Spiridon Sobol, it's also the homeland of multiple world skating champion, Igor Zhelezovsky, and the Belarusian classical writer, Vladimir Korotkevich. A monument to the latter stands on the bank of the Dnieper, on the site of the house where the writer was born.

Recollecting legendary 'Katyusha'

Orsha is known in the history of the Great Patriotic War as the city where a mine thrower — 'named Katyusha' — was fired for the first time on July 14th, 1941. Captain Flerov's battery attacked several German trains heading for Moscow. 25 years later, a memorial complex — For Our Soviet Motherland! — was erected to honour the legendary weapon.

By Olga Kruchenkova

Monument to 'Katyusha' which first fired at the enemy



Genre is enjoying a renaissance

Piano duets are always enchanting, though it's rare that true masters join forces in this way

A duo relies on kinship and subtle interaction of souls...

Natalia: As a rule, educational establishments train pianists as solo performers but we have to share the music we play and audiences' attention. This is difficult but pleasant.

It's interesting to enjoy this artistic relationship and cooperation. As in any other ensemble, participants

must understand each other and work like a family. You'll only endure if you're united in your aims.

Valery: It's very important not to blindly follow principles — as if you understand nothing. You need to make concessions to your partner, although the latter might later realise their mistake. Some arguments aren't worth having. It's better to enjoy respect and understanding, professionally and personally. Otherwise, it will be reflected in your music and your duet will fail. This is vital, even where both soloists are excellent performers.

Natalia joined the duo immediately after graduating from the Conservatory, while Valery was already quite an experienced soloist. Did you manage to quickly find a common language?

Valery: Yes, we did. Knowing many other duos, this was truly a rare case. In the beginning, we often conceded to each other, as was correct. However, as time passed, we were able to express ourselves more frankly, having come to an understanding.

Natalia: There's been a piano duet at

B

el a -

rusian State Philharmonic soloists Natalia Kotova and Valery Borovikov have been working together for almost two decades. As the leading Belarusian pianist duet, their concerts are well known domestically and abroad. Here, they tell us about their four handed performances.



Pianists Natalia Kotova and Valery Borovikov have played as a duet for almost twenty years

► Continents under circus top

Minsk International Circus Festival scheduled for September 21st-24th

“We’ve decided to follow the principle of the Olympics, with all continents represented in Minsk,” states the Belarusian State Circus’ Artistic Director, Vytautas Grigalyunas. “We’re already negotiating with various countries. Pleasingly, many are speaking of our circus with admiration, accepting invitations eagerly.”

It’s not yet decided who will represent our country at the festival. A contest has been announced among artistes, to make the final decision. Organisers are convinced that only the worthiest will perform, since Belarusians will be judged by an international jury, as well as a public jury. Several legendary artistes of global fame have already agreed to participate.

The public jury will comprise top officials and celebrities, with the latter looking at the show with ‘amateur eyes’. Recognition will take the form of the Audience’s Sympathy Award and a prize given by the children’s jury, with gold, silver and bronze awards for solo performers and those in groups.

New circus programme includes tightrope walkers, jugglers, acrobats, trapeze artists, and animal trainers.



the Philharmonic since 1980. Valery Borovikov is one of its founders and a permanent member. Performers and composers worldwide admire his transcriptions for two pianos. When I joined this small team, in 1998, I kept my eyes and ears open, to absorb everything new. I’ve never experienced rejection; we work in harmony. Without it, we wouldn’t have managed to continue for so many years.

Don’t you ever argue when offering feedback?

Valery: Of course, we discuss professional issues but never cross the borders of politeness. I wouldn’t say we quarrel; rather, we try to find the right solutions together, exchanging impressions after concerts. We avoid petty squabbles. Everyone knows what has happened on stage, so there’s no need to stir up bad feeling. We learn from our mistakes, and move on.

You spend all day together — at rehearsals, concerts and during tours. Do your families feel jealousy?

Natalia: It’s our job and everyone understands this. Our duo lacks conflict and our families are tolerant.

You give concerts at the Philharmonic — playing two pianos simultaneously. You also often tour small towns, where local halls offer a single, old piano...

Natalia: It’s true. We tour the country often and this situation does occur. Definitely, two pianos are better, as audiences can enjoy a more spectacular show. It’s not always convenient to play a single piano with four hands, but it’s possible. We sometimes have to play on instruments of not the best quality but we never shy away from this. Meeting with audiences is the main part of our work, spreading our love of music. Our mission is to enchant people with music, and to show them how to enjoy it. Accordingly, we choose programmes to suit the audience: children, young people or adults. We’re delighted to enjoy a warm response; our concerts are usually received enthusiastically.

Valery: Actually, piano duets are extremely popular today. There’s probably not a single musical school without one or two such ensembles. Teachers and students alike play. There’s an increasing number of touring duets too, as the genre is enjoying a renaissance.

By Irina **Svirko**



Works impress not only with appearance

It's no exaggeration to assert that the National Art Museum of Belarus can delight connoisseurs with its exhibitions: permanent and temporary. We love sharing news of the museum's incredible collection and its work to restore and enlighten. Here, we continue our disclosure of its many masterpieces of Belarusian and world art.

The museum focuses on themes and coherence of presentation above chronology. Barbara Radziwiłł was the 'Juliet' of the Belarusian Middle Ages. Famous and mysterious, her colourful portrait opens 'The Radziwiłłs: the Fates of the Country and the Family' exhibition at the National Art Museum. The unique exhibition includes about a hundred exhibits revealing the history of the famous kings without a crown: picturesque and graphic portraits, miniatures, medals, and art fabrics, as donated to the museum by Maciej Radziwiłł.

He desires to remind Belarusians of their history. The project features a gallery of portraits of famous personalities: Barbara Radziwiłł (the Queen of Poland), her father Jerzy Radziwiłł, Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł Sierotka (the founder of the Nesvizh residence), and his brother Jerzy (a Cardinal and Krakow's Bishop), among others.

Some portraits are unique in existing in only a single copy and there are some true relics: a Slutsk sash (of almost 4m in length) and the Makata decorative fabric made at Radziwiłł's Slutsk factory. The 'Nesvizh Hunt with Crown Prince William' is among those works which Maciej associ-



In total, the unique exposition, entitled ‘The Radziwiłłs: the Fates of the Country and the Family’, includes about a hundred exhibits revealing the history of the famous kings without a crown



Yuri Pen, ‘Little House with a Goat’

ates with his childhood. “Many guests used to gather at my grandmother’s house and I was able to chat with people born in the 19th century,” he explains. “Thanks to them, I gained interest in the history of not only my family but of others.” Maciej Radziwiłł is now trying to attract children’s attention. He has five children and possesses several hundred photographs of the Radziwiłł’s portraits from Belarus, Ukraine and Lithuania. Maciej adds that he plans to publish a family album, where each photo will be accompanied by brief biographical information.

A certain stage in the development of the visual arts of Belarus is connected with the opening of the first private school of painting in 1897 in Vitebsk by Yuri Pen (1854-1937) — a native of Lithuania, and a graduate of the St. Petersburg Academy of

Arts. Pen’s school operated for two decades, creating the foundation for the initial art education of many artists — including Solomon Yudovin, Mikhail Leitman, Chaim Livshits and Marc Chagall. Many works by Yuri Pen have clear themes. The phantasmagoric character of his ‘Little House with a Goat’ (presented as part of the National Art Museum’s permanent exhibition) shows clearly Vitebsk’s outskirts, with its abandoned wooden houses. Drawn on cardboard using deformation and exaggeration techniques, it features the animal-residents of the Belarusian town.

It’s believed that Pen’s work was created under the influence of the aesthetics and poetics of Marc Chagall, who was one of the master’s brightest pupils. It’s like a ‘variation on Chagall’s theme’ while being more down-to-earth, depicting Jewish and Belarusian life. We see Pen’s ‘little house with a goat’ and ‘little house with a pig’.

The museum’s collection also contains works by the Caravaggists: followers of the great Italian artist, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, who was overwhelmed by earthly passions, full of inner drama. The most striking example is Venetian artist Antonio Zanchi’s ‘Palamedes and Odysseus’, exploring the adventures of the Greek King of the Island of Ithaca. To avoid participating in the Trojan War — not wishing to leave his home and newly-born son Telemachus — he feigned madness when the Greek leaders came to claim him, ploughing the field and sowing it with salt. However, Palamedes placed baby Telemachus in a furrow in front of the plough, obliging Odysseus to confess his lie and go to war.

The artist uses Caravaggio’s sharp contrast of shade and light directed from below, creating the effect of faces appearing from the darkness (a ‘funeral lighting’ effect), amplifying dra-



Antonio Zanchi, 'Palamedes and Odysseus'



Anna Rosina Lisiewska, 'Portrait of Michał Kazimierz Ogiński' (1755)

matic tension. Faces loom up with great reality. Like Caravaggio, Pen explored mythological characters and peasants alike.

Yevgeny Lansere was one of the most significant sculptors of late 19th century Russia, focusing on realism, and painting a range of compositions: both small in size and close to monumental. These explore the themes of nature, with fine attention to detail and filigree finishes. The museum's multi-figured composition, 'Don Cossack-Foragers', drawn by the master in 1878, shows an episode from the Russian-Turkish War. Russian troops crossed the Danube River in 1877, on a military operation to prevent the Turks from seizing Montenegro.

A contemporary of Lansere was Russian art critic Vladimir Stasov, who said of Lansere's 'Don Cossack-Foragers' that, following the vicious lashes, sabres and fists we know they have endured, they take their horses to drink water, their 'semi-Kalmyk faces quiet, meek and unperturbed'. Undoubtedly, this is one of the best works by Yevgeny Lansere; its details meticulously accurate, while revealing poetic truth.

In the mid-18th century, Dresden became a significant artistic centre of Europe. The Academy of Arts was then headed by famous French artist Louis Sylvester, surrounded by

talented local artists who often created portraits of Polish and Saxon nobles. Among them was the then popular Dresden artist Anna Rosina Lisiewska.

A huge portrait of composer and philanthropist Michał Kazimierz Ogiński (1730-1800) appears in the National Art Museum's collection, with the great man dressed as a commander, having served as a general with the Lithuanian Police, as a Royal Colonel and as a Vilno Commander. Better known as the founder of the Opera Theatre and Capella, in Slonim, and the first builder of the Ogiński Canal, his name is closely connected with Belarusian culture. The composition's decorative theatricality and majestic pose perfectly correspond with the portrait's intention, of glorifying the military valour of its subject.



In late 19th century, cultural and educational societies were emerging across Belarus. These societies of fine art lovers brought together local artists and literary figures, and helped raise public awareness of art. Graduates of the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts participated in developing art education, with Yermakov teaching drawing in Minsk. Fer-

Yevgeny Lansere, 'Don Cossack-Foragers'



Ferdynand Ruszczyc, 'Near the Church' (1899)



Inside the museum, near a Slutsk belt fragment

dynand Ruszczyc, the wonderful landscape painter, was among his pupils.

In 1902, when Ferdynand was at the peak of his fame across Russia, he suddenly broke off all ties with Petersburg, having grown estranged from its aristocratic elite. In his diary, he wrote: 'For a long time, I looked critically at what was ours. Finally, I fell in love with our past, our Fatherland. I felt myself to be its son and feel a sense of duty towards it'. The following year, he returned to his homeland. After working in Warsaw, he became the first dean of the Arts Department at the newly opened Vilno University, working there from 1919 to 1932.

The artist was inspired by his native estate of Bogdanovo and its surroundings. His 'Near the Church' (1899) features the Roman Catholic church and belfry in the village of Bogdanovo, belonging to the Ruszczyc family. It was a subject he often returned to in the early period of his artistry. The picture, with its low horizon, obliges us to look upwards, creating monumentality. Meanwhile, the composition prevents our eyes from focusing on the action in front of the church. Between the belfry and the church, our eyes are directed towards the bright blue of a spring sky. This dominates the landscape, with low white cumulus clouds setting the picture's rhythm and motion, drawing our attention. The movement of these clouds evokes an expressionistic style, in spirit and manner.

Crafted works dating from the 18th century are also on show: sadly only fragments of famous Slutsk sashes, since the National Art Museum has no complete belts. It has two fragments of different sashes and two ornates (Catholic clothing where sashes are sewn into the central part). Slutsk sashes are globally recognised as a national relic of Belarus, having been hand woven from the mid-18th century into the early 19th century. They were an important part of men's costume, symbolising power

and wealth. In the 17th and 18th centuries, silk sashes with gold and silver threads became fashionable among the upper and middle classes of Europe and Russia. Articles made by masters from the Ottoman Empire, Persia, Iran and China were viewed as exemplary but imported sashes were rare and expensive, inspiring the establishment of local workshops, called 'persiarnyas'.

The high level of skill among Belarusian weavers inspired Duke Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł when choosing his main location for sash production. In 1758, he invited weaver Jan Majarsky from Stanislav (Ukraine) to work first at Nesvizh and then at Slutsk, in his workshops. Born in Istanbul, Jan brought the eastern traditions of making silk sashes to the Rzecz Pospolita, teaching local weavers to make sashes 2-5 metres in length. Depending on the number of metal threads, cast, half-cast and plain sashes were distinguished.

The National Art Museum's permanent exhibition includes a fragment of a sash featuring the woven name of the town of Slutsk and the name of the workshop owner of that time: Leo Majarsky. In subtle, pearly shades of pale pink, beige and blue, it's a perfect example of artistic taste, a natural sense of colour and compositional harmony, as was typical of Slutsk sashes, placing them on a par with the highest achievements of world artistic culture.

One of the few surviving pre-war collection pieces is the 'Mercury with Reed-Pipe' sculpture, created by Giuseppe del Nero of Carrara. The portraitist loved to sculpt allegorical compositions and this one is a copy of the famous statue (1818) by Denmark's Bertel Thorvaldsen, which can be viewed in the Thorvaldsen Museum in Copenhagen. The Dane's popularity encouraged Giuseppe del Nero to make several similar works, which were eagerly bought by European collectors, since they lacked the opportunity to acquire the original by Thorvaldsen.



Near M. Savitsky's 'Partisan Madonna of Minsk' picture

Once owned by Gomel's Duke Fiodor Paskevich, in 1939, the statue was brought to the Minsk Picture Gallery, alongside other pieces, and escaped being stolen by the Nazis during the Great Patriotic War. However, it still bears traces of the damage it received during those terrible times.

Mikhail Savitsky is a legend of Belarusian art, having gained fame in the 1960s, thanks to his exploration of military themes. A war veteran himself, he helped defend Sevastopol and endured captivity in the concentration camps. He later entered Minsk's Art College and studied at Moscow's Surikov Institute. His works are dedicated to the horrors of war, and the suffering experienced. His 'Partisans' and 'Vitebsk Gate' depict real events via allegorical expression, showing ordinary people trying to survive harsh military conditions. 'Vitebsk Gate' is some kind of Ladoga Lake on the Belarusian territory, a path of life on the occupied territory which was protected by a partisan brigade headed by Batka Minay. Refugees — women with children, old people, and wounded soldiers are escaping war's horrors.

In his 'Partisan Madonna of Minsk', the artist examined the theme of motherhood: the symbol of life. The famous Renais-

sance painting, Raphael's 'Sistine Madonna' is at the heart of the composition but, instead of biblical characters, the artist depicts ordinary people under the heavy hand of Fascism. Savitsky developed a new concept of humanism: that of people who'd survived the war and understood the value of human life, and the fine line protecting us from destruction. This was his main manifesto: the desire to urge remembrance of the terrible catastrophe of war.

During his time in Moscow (1955), Valentin Volkov finished his huge 'Minsk. July 3rd, 1944', which became his 'calling card'. In March 1945, Volkov concluded an agreement to paint a canvas for the hall of the House of Soviets, which determined its size and format. He worked on the picture for about ten years, creating more than 220 preparatory drawings, eleven compositional sketches and around fifty 'close detail' sketches.

His neighbours posed for the work, alongside soldiers from the Belarusian Military District, and his own relatives (including Valentin Volkov's wife and his son Anatoly, also an artist). Each character's expression builds a startling evocation of Minsk's liberation from the Nazi invaders, drawing from his own memories. Volkov personally witnessed city residents welcoming the Soviet troops. He focused on the idea of triumph, using techniques of classical painting, as learnt during his years at the St. Petersburg Academic School. The composition uses the classical principle of small triangles within a main triangle.

The artist conveyed the feeling of happiness shared by Minsk residents on that July morning, greeting the liberating soldiers. 'Minsk. July 3rd, 1944' is among the most perfect works and occupies a special place in the art of Belarus, being an emblem of Victory and the joy of liberation for our capital city and country.

By Veniamin **Mikheev**



'Minsk. July 3rd, 1944' by Valentin Volkov delighting audiences

